



Study Japanese in Arlington Annual Report 2023

Fiscal Year 2023

October 30, 2023



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Introduction

Study Japanese in Arlington (SJA) completed its fifth year in Fiscal Year 2023 (July 2022-June 2023) as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Founded in September 2018, SJA continued to promote and support the study of the Japanese language and Japanese culture in Arlington, Virginia and the greater Washington, D.C. metropolitan area.

Noteworthy in this Fiscal Year was a series of seasonal and other cultural events organized throughout the year, such as our first *wagashi* Japanese sweet-making event, tea ceremony events, and a *nengajō* (New Year's greeting card) writing workshop. SJA also set up booths at the National Cherry Blossom Festival's Sakura Matsuri, Pink in the Park, Awesome Con, and Ekoji-obon festival, attracting more than a thousand visitors all together. In-person, free Japanese language classes have resumed at the Arlington Central Library since January, which has created a steady community of adult learners. The Tsukuba University information session was also popular among students in Arlington and in the surrounding area. We continue to introduce interested students to opportunities for studying at Japanese colleges.

Through our Setagaya Committee, we developed several new activities and collaborations. In August 2022, we hosted Principal Namikawa of Tokyo Engei (Horticultural) High School, which has been the sister school of Arlington Career Center and Technical High School since 2018. His visit also coincided with the online urban agriculture event we hosted with Friends of Urban Agriculture in Arlington (also founded in 2018), and we continue that relationship by volunteering at their Highland Urban Garden near Pentagon City. In February 2023, we started hosting monthly US-Japan and Arlington-Setagaya networking happy hours in Rosslyn that have been attracting regular attendees. Finally, our online youth exchange with Setagaya City and Tokyo area youth has continued for a full three years now.

SJA also provided volunteer support to high-school students who are studying Japanese language in the classroom. We hope to continue to support students of Japanese language and culture in Arlington. We truly appreciate your interest in and support for SJA and its activities.

Sincerely,
SJA Board, FY2022-23



Board News

With the retirement of SJA founding President Mine Sasaguri from the board in June 2022, SJA was proud to announce the creation of the SJA Founder Mine Sasaguri Service Award, which is to be given annually to one volunteer who has embodied the spirit of SJA—education, outreach and advocacy—at a high level of commitment and been an integral part of the SJA community. The 2022 award was given to Mine Sasaguri in an award ceremony, and retiring board members were recognized with an origami medal and official certificate of appreciation. This will be an annual event; in 2023, we celebrated Michiko Okuma, the first awardee after Mine Sasaguri's retirement.



Key Highlights of FY 2023 (JULY 2022-JUNE 2023)

Education

SJA has resumed in-person language classes. Starting January 11, 2023, SJA has been hosting Japanese conversation class every Wednesday at Arlington Central Library for intermediate Japanese learners. Participants gathered to practice Japanese, covering various topics while also expanding their vocabulary.

Free virtual language and culture classes for adult beginners were also continued once a month, taught by two professional teacher volunteers—one in Arlington and one in Japan. The class continues to be popular with regular attendees.



Origami

SJA continued to offer free monthly virtual origami workshops throughout FY2023. This continues to be one of SJA's signature classes, taught by certified artists and teachers from Taro's Origami Studio. Each month's workshop focused on a seasonal theme, such as Thanksgiving, New Year's, and Valentine's Day. For Arlington Community Learning's Youth Education Program, an SJA-affiliated, Taro's Origami Studio-certified teacher taught a two-hour in-person workshop in December, featuring holiday season models. The SJA Origami Team also completed the community art project which started in FY2022, making origami doves in yellow and blue (the colors of the Ukrainian flag) and pasting them onto a poster board. The poster board was donated in December to D Light Cafe & Bakery in D.C., which is owned by Ukrainian sisters. Lastly, the Arlington Public Library requested that the SJA Origami Team hold a workshop for beginners in October and April at the Westover and Cherrydale branches, and the team taught the models for the YouCrane ornament and for cherry blossoms, respectively.



Outreach

In FY2023, SJA continued to offer in-person activities. Key highlights include the following activities.



In July 2022, SJA hosted an information booth at Ekoji Temple's Obon Festival in July 2022. This was the first time SJA participated in the Ekoji Temple's Obon Festival. SJA organized games and origami. Over 100 people stopped by to say hello and learn more about SJA.

In September 2022, SJA hosted an afternoon of Japanese table games at Arlington Central Library. It was our first in person event at the library since we stopped during the pandemic. More than 25 volunteers and participants gathered for Pokémon bingo, origami, and Japanese Uno.



**Come and play
JGO, Pokemon
Bingo, and
make some
Origami!!**

**Where?:
Central Library**



**Brought to
you by
Study
Japanese in
Arlington!!**



**September
25th
2pm-4pm**

**Japanese
Game Day**



In October 2022, the second annual Harvest Moon Tea Ceremony was held in collaboration with Omotesenke Domonkai Toshiba. This year's authentic tea experience served tea to over 50 guests and had over 100 visitors and volunteers.



In February 2023, SJA held a Wagashi Making Workshop. The wagashi is so beautiful to look at and delicious to eat, Wagashi are traditional Japanese sweets that can be found in teahouses, cafes, and specialty stores all across Japan. Typically served alongside a cup of matcha to balance out the bitterness of the tea, they are an intrinsic part of Japanese culture and often closely linked to the seasons or local region. The instructor provided step-by-step instructions on how to create a seasonal wagashi!





In April 2023, in celebration of spring and a cherry blossom season, SJA partnered with National Landing Pink in the Park to bring origami and matcha tea tasting at Long Bridge Aquatic Center.

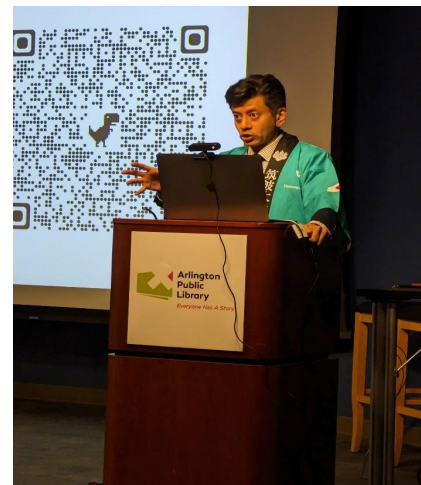
SJA also participated in Sakura Matsuri and stationed a booth to give visitors a little oasis of matcha tasting. Adults and children also enjoyed decorating an origami cherry blossom tree with their own origami folded piece of the tree!

In June 2023, SJA participated in Awesome Con at the Walter E. Washington Convention Center, the second year in doing so. SJA's booth was popular with those who like to learn Japanese language and culture!



University of Tsukuba Information Session

On May 25, 2023, SJA hosted an information session for the University of Tsukuba. It was the first in-person university information session since the pandemic and the first-ever hybrid information session. The participants learned about the University of Tsukuba itself, one of the most prestigious national universities in Japan, as well as the various programs offered for international students at the university.



With over 60 people in attendance (about 40 in person and 20 via Zoom), it was a huge success! Even after the Q&A session was over, many interested students lined up to ask more questions of the presenter. The participants thanked SJA for providing the opportunity to learn about the little-known yet very attractive programs at Tsukuba.



Arlington-Setagaya Partnership Committee

The Arlington-Setagaya Partnership Committee (SETCOM) has had a very productive year. In July 2022, SETCOM representatives Risa Kamio, Mika Tamaki, Junko Katada and Yoshimi Muto visited Mayor Hosaka's office in Setagaya for the first time. They presented SJA's Arlington-Setagaya activities as well as related initiatives in Arlington County. In August 2022, SJA hosted Naoto Namikawa, the principal of Tokyo Horticultural High School in Setagaya, for a three-day visit in Arlington. Tokyo Horticultural High School is a sister school of Arlington Technical High School and Career Center. This visit included a visit to the community gardens of Friends of Urban Agriculture Arlington and a hybrid exchange with an urban farmer in Setagaya, while Namikawa-sensei presented on agricultural education in Japan and at his high school. These events are described in more detail in the December 2022 newsletter and a February 2023 blog post.



In February 2023, we also started hosting monthly networking happy hours at Assembly in Rosslyn, which focus on US-Japan relations and Arlington-Setagaya connections. The happy hours turned out to be popular and more than 20 interested individuals have been coming regularly.



The Arlington-Setagaya Partnership Committee continued to host bilingual online youth exchanges between Arlington-area and Tokyo-area youth. This was already the third year and while it keeps going monthly except for some holiday breaks. We've also hosted information booths on studying and traveling in Japan at most of SJA's cultural events, including the two-day Sakura Matsuri in April 2023.

Our main Setagaya City connection is council member Risa Kamio who lived in the D.C. area for 10 years. She was reelected for another four-year term, as was Mayor Hosaka in April 2023. SETCOM hopes to welcome Mayor Hosaka on a visit to Arlington for Sakura Matsuri next spring. He is very interested in green urban design in the U.S. and we are learning where Arlington organizations are leading the way. In addition, the sister school relationship has completed its fifth year and we would like our two cities to sign a friendship agreement in the next year, as a precursor to becoming sister cities.

Advocacy

SJA was pleased to observe the sustained enrollment in the Arlington Public Schools Japanese program through SY2022-2023. Enrollment in Japanese I, II, and III has more than tripled since SJA was founded in 2018, from just over 50 students in 2017-18 to close to 160 students in 2021-22, and enrollment remained at a similar rate with 155 students in 2022-23. The retention of students taking Japanese language courses and moving up from Japanese I to Japanese II and from Japanese II to Japanese III has also increased. However, the enrollment projections for the school year in 2023-204 are expected to decrease, which is of concern to SJA.

SJA will continue supporting the APS Japanese program's expansion. With more students progressing to continue Japanese language education, a need for higher level Japanese language programs, such as Japanese IV and Advanced Placement Japanese is becoming necessary. Some Japanese heritage students take Japanese language through credit by exam and study for Advanced Placement Japanese on their own. Currently APS support to students for this is lacking. SJA hopes that APS will start offering these courses. Further, while the Japanese language classes are offered at Wakefield, Washington-Liberty, and Yorktown High Schools, no classes are offered at H-B Woodlawn or Arlington Career Center. SJA hopes that middle school students in APS will have an opportunity to select Japanese as a world language to study in the near future. All world language choices are offered in APS from middle school, except for two languages. Unfortunately, Japanese is one of them and not a choice offered in middle school in APS. Virtual Virginia has started curriculum development for a Japanese program, which will become another option for APS students, and other students in Virginia, to study Japanese if it is not offered at their own schools. Japanese I is already available at Virtual Virginia.



SJA continues to place support for Arlington youth wishing to study Japanese as a critical priority. SJA is honored to help and support the Japanese language classes in APS and to have the opportunity to interact with students interested in Japanese. SJA started as “Save Japanese in Arlington” in May 2018, after APS announced its intention to consolidate and phase out the Japanese language program. Students in Arlington led a grassroots campaign (supported by Japan-related communities in the greater D.C. area), organized a petition, and appealed the decision to the school board. As a result, APS reversed its decision and saved the Japanese program at its high schools, thanks to this grassroots campaign.



Organization and Committee Structure of SJA

In June 2023, the SJA board approved an expansion of the board members from the original 12 members to up to 15 to respond to increasing demand and interest for SJA events and activities. One of the unique features of the SJA is that its board includes two or more positions designated for youth in Arlington high schools who study Japanese or have interest in promoting Japanese language and culture, reflecting the origin of SJA as a grassroots organization established by high-school students and their parents. The board members are volunteers brought together by their common interest of promoting Japanese language and culture in Arlington and the broader Washington, D.C. metropolitan area. The Board represents a diverse mix of backgrounds, both in ethnicities and in skills and competencies. Their career backgrounds span fields such as media, law, education, government, finance, business, accounting, IT, and human resources. SJA has had three youth board members for the past three years and next fiscal year will have four youth board members. These youth board members have gone on to college in Japan or studied Japanese at colleges in the United States or continued their studies in APS. Appendix B lists the present and past board members and executive committee members of the SJA in recognition of their service.

SJA has an active committee structure and SJA's activities are carried out by the appropriate committees.

The **Executive Committee** consists of the President, Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer. The by-laws establish the Executive Committee and the **Finance Committee** as permanent committees. The rest are ad hoc committees created by the board. Ad hoc committees have been renamed over the years, but they have maintained similar functions as their activities. In FY 22-23, SJA had the following committee structure:

- a. The **Education Committee** plans and supports language and cultural classes.
- b. The **Japanese Language Advocacy Committee** focuses on APS students.
- c. The **Event and Outreach Committee** plans cultural events and festivals.
- d. The **Youth Committee** coordinates youth input in SJA programming. Youth Committee members also write posts for the SJA Youth Blogs, posted to the SJA website.
- e. SJA created an **IT and Communications Committee** in FY21 to handle all of its growing online activities and communication needs.

Over the past years, SJA has strengthened its committee structure as a way to recruit leaders and volunteers and to enable former volunteers and board members to stay involved when they leave the Arlington area. Appendix C lists the old and new committee structures.

Appendix A: Financial Report of Revenue and Expenses for FY 2023 (July 2022-June 2023)

Revenues	(USD)
Grants from Foundations	1,000.00
of which JCAW foundation	1,000.00
Individual Donations	2,788.97
Outreach Program Donations	2,385.10
Total revenues	\$6,174.07
Expenses	
Administration	4,158.58
of which Website maintenance	1,516.80
of which United States liability insurance	1,433.00
of which General admin (tax, license, postage, subscription, etc)	1,208.78
Outreach Program Operations	2,888.21
Education Program Operations	59.66
Total expenses	\$7,106.45
<hr/>	
Net Loss	\$932.38
Bank Statement Ending balance as of June 30, 2023	\$12,643.09

*The outreach program in FY23 included the following.

- Sakura Matsuri
- Tea ceremony event
- Wagashi event
- Enkoji Bon festival
- National Landing Pink in the Park

Appendix B: SJA's Board and Executive Committee Members since FY 2018

FY 2018-19

President	Mine Sasaguri
Vice President	Miki Terasawa
Treasurer	Yuri Ellison
Secretary	Seiko Kyan-Reich
Members	Winnie Brent, Satoko Kajima-Best, John McLaughlin, Jack Nelson, Sabrina Nelson,

FY 2019-20

President	Mine Sasaguri
Vice President	Miki Terasawa
Treasurer	Yuri Ellison
Secretary	Seiko Kyan-Reich
Members	Sophia Field, Maya Green, Satoko Kajima-Best, John McLaughlin, Sabrina Nelson, Jennifer Swanson

FY 2020-21

President	Miki Terasawa
Vice President	Jennifer Swanson
Treasurer	Yuri Ellison
Secretary	Mine Sasaguri and Anna Fry
Members	Sophia Field, Junko Katada, John McLaughlin, Yoshimi Muto, Sabrina Nelson, Emiko Todoroki

FY 2021-22

President	Jennifer Swanson
Vice President	Emiko Todoroki
Treasurer	Yoko Scanlen
Secretary	John McLaughlin and Dylan Vasquez

Members Anna Fry, Junko Katada, Yoshimi Muto, Sabrina Nelson, Alea Ortiguerra, Ninjin Purev-Erdene, Mine Sasaguri

FY 2022-23

President Jennifer Swanson

Vice President Emiko Todoroki

Treasurer Yoko Scanlen

Secretary John McLaughlin

Members Sophia Field, Junko Katada, Grace Kim, Yoshimi Muto, Joe Recht, Kamryn Sauri, Yuta Toda, Dylan Vasquez

FY 2023-24

President Emiko Todoroki

Vice President Joe Recht

Treasurer Miwako Horisawa

Secretary John McLaughlin

Members Khaliun Enkhbold, Sophia Field, Sasha Jovanovski, Junko Katada, Yoshimi Muto, Sabrina Nelson, Kamryn Sauri, Miyuki Stone, Yuta Toda, Hana Vasquez

Appendix C: SJA Committee Structure

Former (FY 2018-22)	Current (FY 22-23)
Executive Committee	Executive Committee
Finance Committee	Finance Committee
	Fundraising Subcommittee
	Education Committee
Japanese Language Committee	Japanese Language Advocacy Committee
Program Advocacy Subcommittee	
Japan Day Committee	Setagaya Committee
Outreach Committee	Outreach and Events Committee
Youth Committee	Youth Committee
Recruitment Committee	Communications Committee

Appendix D: Acknowledgement of SJA Grants and Donors from FY 2018 to FY 2022

Organization	Purpose
Arlington County Arts	Grant for arts programs (2020 and 2021)
Japan Foundation	Teaching Materials
Japan Foundation Los Angeles	Japan Day 2021
Embassy of Japan	Japan Day 2020
JCAW (Japan Commerce Association of Washington, DC) Foundation Inc	Programming 2022
JCAW (Japan Commerce Association of Washington, DC) Foundation Inc	Japan Day 2020
JCAW (Japan Commerce Association of Washington, DC) Foundation Inc	Programming 2019
Embassy of Japan/MAATJ	Japan Day 2019

The above grants ranged from \$1,000 to \$20,000 for a total of \$37,782.15. SJA wishes to thank our funders for their generosity.

SJA also wishes to thank the many individual donors who have attended our events and made cash donations or responded to our year-end donation drives and crowdfunding appeals. In particular in FY 22-23, the Mendis family were very generous donors.