



Washington Japanese Heritage Center (Keisho Center)

ワシントン日本語継承センター

keisho.org / facebook.com/keishocenter / info@keisho.org

P.O. Box 142
Cabin John, MD 20818

June 1, 2020

Dear Keisho Center Families:

Each year the Board of Directors of the Washington Japanese Heritage Center (Keisho Center) reports on the status, operations, and future plans of our organization. This has been a year like no other. We hope your families are staying well and managing as best as possible during these challenging times.

In January 2020, we announced the election of our new President, Dr. Shoko Hamano. Hamano-sensei already served for two years on the Keisho Center Board of Directors when she was unanimously elected for this new role. Dr. Hamano is a Professor of Japanese and International Affairs and chairs the Department of East Asian Languages and Literatures at The George Washington University. She is a well-known researcher in the field of Japanese language education and Japanese phonology (in particular, sound symbolism). We are very lucky to have such a competent and seasoned researcher and educator to lead our Center.

Our whole community wishes to extend our heartfelt appreciation to Dr. Shigeru Tsubakitani, who stepped down in January 2020 after more than 15 years as President of Keisho Center. Tsubakitani-sensei was instrumental in founding Keisho Center in 2004 and has served in a variety of roles since that time. We are deeply indebted to Tsubakitani-sensei for his vision and hard work over many years and look forward to continuing to benefit from his wisdom as Board Director Emeritus. Thank you, Tsubakitani-sensei!



In mid-March, in accordance with government stay-at-home orders and to proactively prevent the spread of COVID-19, Keisho Center canceled in-person classes and shifted to a distance learning program for the remainder of the school year. We have conducted all learning activities virtually since that time. It has been both a demanding as well as inspiring time for our entire community with impacts sure to be felt for years to come.

Keisho Center's distance learning program has focused on both asynchronous projects as well as activities that students can take part in simultaneously. While under stay-at-home orders, students are writing journals and stories in Japanese, making presentations about different subjects of interest to them, and conducting interviews and research. Each Saturday, students gather on Zoom to join virtual Japanese language and culture lessons with their teachers, guest speakers, and for some groups, with other heritage language students across the country. While we have learned a lot about how to deliver a quality heritage language program online, we look forward to a time when we can come together again as a community.

Collectively, our faculty has many years of online teaching experience. During this uncertain time, Keisho Center teachers have worked diligently to further refine their online teaching strategies and share best practices for distance learning. If there is a silver lining to the COVID-19 crisis, it is that Keisho Center staff are now much better prepared to operate remotely as a team.

We acknowledge the impact this transition to distance learning has had on routines and want to express our gratitude to families for their continued partnership in working through these changes. We are grateful for the patience and understanding of our students, families, and staff as we continue to move forward in a way that serves the needs of the Keisho Center community.

Keisho Center's Board of Directors, Education Team and Core Group are in ongoing



discussions about our activities moving forward. We are developing contingency plans for the 2020-21 school year with guidance from the state of Maryland, relevant local authorities, and Norwood School. Plans under consideration for classes beginning on August 29, 2020 include:

1. **In-person** classes at Norwood School: if social distancing requirements have been lifted and schools can safely open.
2. **Hybrid** in-person and distance learning classes: if schools can safely open with multiple options to maintain social distancing (e.g. rotating live and online instruction and/or using additional classrooms to allow for social distancing).
3. **Distance Learning**: if stay-at-home orders persist or if conditions about returning safely to in-person classes are still unclear in August when a decision must be made.

At this time, we are unsure what effect these options may have on our budget. We may incur significant short-term costs such as renting more classroom space; hiring additional staff to monitor smaller groups; purchasing additional personal protective equipment (PPE); additional costs associated with technological needs to support online learning; and/or paying for frequent deep cleaning and disinfecting of the areas we use at Norwood School.

We will continue to offer valuable learning activities to all our families and remain committed to being good financial stewards so that Keisho Center can continue to flourish. Our staff and the Board of Directors are closely monitoring cash flow, expenses, and the budget as we move forward. In order to retain our talented staff and compensate them as they have adjusted to distance learning, we have continued to pay them and maintained their salaries at the current levels. The Board of Directors is acting



prudently to make sure our Center's financial future is secure while providing a safe educational environment and a quality heritage language program.

During the 2019-20 school year, Keisho Center enrolled 116 youth students and 10 parents in the Adult Japanese Language Program. The General Manager, working with our Education Team, which this year included the Curriculum Coordinator, ten teachers, three teaching assistants, and one Music Director, supported nine classrooms in addition to the adult program. We also employed a Treasurer, Webmaster, and an Admissions Assistant.

As the number of students attending Keisho Center has grown each year, we have been careful to increase our staffing to maintain class sizes of 10-15 students and a 1:7 teacher-student ratio. For 2019-20, we added an additional homeroom class to accommodate our growth.

Youth classes are organized around nine homerooms during which the teachers and assistants work on general language skills and increase the students' knowledge of and experience with Japan and Japanese culture. The younger students remain in the same classroom for the entire morning while the older students' homerooms are reorganized into target classes that focus on specific grammar skills and vocabulary development. This year, students developed their language skills through projects based on the theme "*Sports and the Olympics.*"

For the fifth year, Keisho Center also offered the Adult Japanese Language Program for family members and alumni. These classes complement our Center's role as a heritage language program by involving the entire family in the study of Japanese. The Board will continue to expand the Adult Program to reach all parents who wish to participate.



Our *undoukai* (sports day) and *mochi tsuki* (rice pounding) were well-attended by families, and Keisho Center students will join in the online version of the Junior Japan Bowl scheduled to take place in June. Unfortunately, *Sakura Matsuri* and our all-school potluck had to be canceled this year. Despite these complications, Keisho Center has maintained strong connections with partner organizations including the Embassy of Japan and Sakura Yochien in Bethesda.

We are proud of our *seitokai* (student government) for raising funds this year to support Center activities. As they have done in the past, *seitokai* has donated these funds to purchase thank you gifts for volunteers and staff. Our activities and annual events take a tremendous amount of planning and preparation. Our Education Team and parent volunteers put in many hours of hard work to make it all happen. We try to thank them at the time, but we would like to once again acknowledge the time, effort, and support of our staff and volunteers: Thank you for all you do to make Keisho Center the great place it is.

Members of the Keisho Center Education Team and Board of Directors regularly seek professional development opportunities to enhance their skills in Japanese heritage language education. In 2019-20, Keisho Center representatives presented at several professional conferences including those of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages and the Foreign Language Association of Virginia. They also joined many online webinars and workshops to sharpen teaching skills such as remote assessments, online tools for younger students, and best practices for Zoom and Blackboard.

Since our founding in 2004, Keisho Center has been very conscientious about keeping costs down without compromising the quality of education despite rising expenses. The Board of Directors will make a decision about the 2020-21 tuition rate as soon as we



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know more information about the budget impacts of expenses related to the COVID-19 pandemic. We will continue to offer discounts for siblings and those who pay the entire amount at the start of the school year as well as incentives for parents taking the Adult Japanese Language Program. At the end of this letter please see the summary of Keisho Center's operating budget for the 2019-20 school year.

Keisho Center was founded to meet the needs of the community. The Board of Directors wants to ensure that all families who are invited to enroll are able to do so. We do not want financial concerns to be a barrier to enrollment. The Board recognizes that some Keisho Center families may be experiencing economic hardship during this time. Within our means, we make financial assistance available to families based on need. In general, we use three times the federal poverty guideline as a threshold for eligibility, but we also look at extenuating circumstances on a case-by-case basis. Feel free to contact any Board Director, the Treasurer, or the General Manager for additional information on financial assistance. All requests are kept confidential.

If you would like to make a donation to help Keisho Center families with tuition assistance, we welcome your contribution. All donations to the financial aid fund will directly assist Keisho Center families with tuition and are tax-deductible. Please make your donation [here](#).

Two Board Directors – Deborah Sauri and John Tobe – will step down this year. We want to express our deepest gratitude to them for their efforts over a combined nine years of service. In addition to their regular duties as Board members, Deborah created a new school brochure and John led a review and update of our corporate bylaws and policies. Their hard work and dedication are greatly appreciated by all.



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We would like to welcome two new Board Directors Margaret Ghobadi and Peter Farrell, whose terms will begin this month. Thank you very much for your willingness to serve on our Board of Directors.

Keisho Center continues to grow and change, but our mission remains to inspire a life-long love for Japanese language and culture in our students. We, the Keisho Center Board of Directors, are proud of all that Keisho Center has accomplished and how our organization is evolving. We look forward to serving our community, working with our students and families, and continuing to grow and develop. If at any time you have any questions, comments, or suggestions, we encourage you to present them to a Board member.

Sincerely,

Keisho Center Board of Directors

Akiko Bentz

Shoko Hamano

Donald Harrison

Marc Hitzig

Ken Knight

Tomomi Miyajima

Deborah Sauri

John Tobe

Shigeo Yoshikawa



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	2019-2020 Actual (Sep-May) + Projected (June-August)
INCOME (in US \$)	Budget
Tuition	149,887
Enrollment Fee	640
Donations	540
Fundraising	513
Interest	757
Test Fee	200
Textbook/Yearbook Fee	272
Miscellaneous Income	2,536
Subtotal	155,345
EXPENSE (in US \$)	
Payroll	116,857
Rent	29,369
Supplies	3,724
Insurance	4,790
General operating expenses/fees	4,105
Professional Development	500
Advertising	12
Test Fee	749
Textbooks/Yearbooks	297
Misc. Expense Subtotal	6,006
Subtotal	166,409
Deficit	-11,065