

March 23, 2011

News Release

For Immediate Release

Japanese Relief Efforts Gain Momentum in Springfield

In response to the earthquake and tsunami in Japan, the Springfield Sister Cities Association and Nakato Japanese Steakhouse, 2615 S. Glenstone Ave., will partner from 4:30 – 10 p.m., Monday, March 28, where every dollar in sales from the entire evening's dinner service will go directly to Springfield's Sister City of Isesaki, Japan.

"Unlike other fundraisers in the area in which a certain percentage of sales goes to a particular cause, 100% of every single dollar brought in, without subtracting the cost of food, is going to our friends in Isesaki to be used for recovery efforts as its local government sees fit," said Sister Cities Coordinator Cindy Jobe. "We're hoping for more than \$15,000 to be raised during the night, and the simple thing about it is we just need our Springfield community to go out to dinner on Monday."

Nakato Japanese Steakhouse has been a long-time supporter of SSCA, helping by hosting dining experiences for visiting delegations from both of Springfield's sister cities. The restaurant is located in the Battlefield Mall parking lot, near the intersection of Glenstone Avenue and Sunset Street. Reservations are recommended by calling 417-881-7171, but walk-ins are accepted.

Isesaki residents raised and donated nearly \$17,000 and sent nine Master Gardeners to Springfield to help rebuild the Japanese Stroll Garden at Nathanael Greene/Close Memorial Park following the 2007 ice storm. They also sent funds to Springfield following the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks and Hurricane Katrina, entrusting their American counterparts to send the money to where they thought it would do the most good in each case.

Donations also will be accepted at this weekend's Cherry Blossom Kite Festival, being held from 11 a.m. – 3 p.m., Saturday, March 26 at the Mizumoto Japanese Stroll Garden in Nathanael Greene/Close Memorial Park, 2400 S. Scenic. The free event celebrates the opening of the stroll garden for the season. Free hands-on activities will be available for children during the event and children's kite-building kits are available for sale for \$3.

With inclement weather in the forecast for both Saturday and Sunday, event organizers are planning to hold the event on Saturday with extra hands-on activities under tents. "We're trying not to let the entire weekend be a wash, so are planning to make the most out of the weather this weekend with at least some extra kids activities at the garden," said Jobe. Things are starting to bloom, so at the very least our visitors might take a walk under an umbrella to see the gardens, especially since this is the one day a year the garden is free to the public." Visit www.peacethroughpeople.org for updates on the event.

For more information, media contact: Cindy Jobe, Sister Cities Coordinator, 417-864-1341 or 417-353-6424.

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