



December 1, 2023

## **Report of the Richmond Shimada Friendship Commission Activities in 2022/2023**

The following report is a summary of the activities of the Richmond Shimada Friendship Commission over the past 14 months.

The Richmond Shimada Friendship Commission was invited to send a delegation to participate in the triennial Obi Matsuri festival held October 2022 in Shimada, Japan. Commission Chair Evan Sirchuk, Commissioners Jamie Brown and Valerie Snider, Staff Liaison Trina Jackson-Lincoln, Mayor Tom Butt, Council Member Demnlus Johnson, past Commissioners Steve Pinto and Steve Kirby, and several other guests visited Shimada and were generously hosted by Mayor Someya and members of the Shimada International Exchange Association (SIEA). Mayor Butt and Commission Chair Sirchuk met with Mayor Someya and renewed our commitment to continuing the 60-plus year friendship between Shimada and Richmond.

In March 2023, the Commission welcomed the first post-pandemic Shimada Youth Friendship Ambassadors to Richmond. Through the combined efforts of volunteers, chaperones, host families, and City resources, the Youth Ambassadors spent nine days visiting WCCUSD schools and experiencing the best of Richmond food, culture and environment. The Commission shared the success of this visit in a short article, written by volunteer member Ana Speros and published by the California-Japan Sister Cities Network (CJSCN) and shared with the Consulate-General of Japan in San Francisco in May 2023, see attached newsletter.

In June 2023, longtime Commission Chair Evan Sirchuk completed his term as Chair. The Commission is deeply grateful for his expert leadership over the past six years and through the ups and downs of the pandemic. The Commission elected new Chair Jamie Brown, Vice Chair-Treasurer Valerie Snider, and Secretary Maryann Maslan.

In August 2023 the Commission held a "Summer in the Parks" Volunteer Appreciation Picnic in collaboration with the Japan Exchange Teaching Alumni Association of Northern California (JETAANC) to celebrate the volunteers who make the Commission's activities possible. The picnic was held at Shimada Friendship Park on August 13th, and featured a game of Ground Golf using equipment gifted by the Shimada Commission. The Commission shared news of the picnic in a short article written by Ana Speros and published in the CJSCN Newsletter in October 2023, see attached.

Currently the Commission is preparing to send the first post-pandemic delegation of Richmond Youth Ambassadors to Shimada in July 2024. We are now in the stage of recruiting Ambassador candidates until early February 2024. Additionally, the Shimada Commission has announced the dates for the next Shimada Youth Friendship Ambassadors delegation visit in March 2024, and announced their intention to send an adult delegation to Richmond later in 2024.

The Commission is also recruiting new volunteers and potential Commissioners, and invites any interested party to attend our regular monthly meetings typically held on the first Wednesday of the month. Please visit the Richmond Shimada Friendship Commission page on the City of Richmond website for schedule updates and further information.

### **Richmond Shimada Friendship Commission - End of Year Activities at a Glance**

- Visit to Shimada October 2022
- Hosted student delegation in March 2023
- Volunteer Appreciation Picnic with JETAANC
- Prepping for student delegation visit in March 2024
- Preparing to send first post-covid Richmond Student Ambassadors in Summer 2024

### **Commissioners:**

- Jamie Brown, Chair
- Valerie Snider, Treasurer
- Maryann Maslan, Secretary
- Evan Sirchuk, Commissioner
- Arriana Rodriguez, Commissioner
- Mindy Pines, Newly Appointed Commissioner

**City Council Liaison** – Councilmember Cesar Zepeda

**Staff Liaisons** – Project Coordinator Trina Jackson-Lincoln and Asst. Admin Analyst Mary Marable

Currently, there are vacancies on the commission. Please visit the City of Richmond [City Commissions](#) webpage to review a list of commissioners, vacancies and application.