



HAMAKUA JODO MISSION OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER MAY 2025



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"Honoring Tradition, Embracing Community"

KODOMO NO HI CHILDREN'S DAY



Kountry & Liam

Originally known as Boys' Day in Japan, May 5th is an annual celebration honoring the health, happiness, and strength of boys. Traditional decorations include samurai dolls, swords, and helmets (*"kabuto"*), which symbolize courage and strength.

The most iconic display is the flying of *koinobori* (carp streamers), often hung from rooftops or in yards to represent the hope that children grow up strong and resilient like the koi swimming upstream. This tradition remains popular in Hawaii, where *koinobori* can still be seen across the islands.

In 1948, the Japanese government officially renamed the holiday Children's Day (*"Kodomo no Hi"*) to celebrate the well-being of all children, regardless of gender.

This year, HJM commemorated Children's Day with a colorful display of *koinobori* hoisted from our 30+ foot flagpole - a notable feat considering the pole had not been used for decades and was frozen in place. HJM member Pickens Kehrer successfully unfroze, lowered, and repaired the flagpole, replacing the string assembly and pulley single-handedly.

Following our Annual Membership Meeting, some of our members stayed to help sort and string the *koinobori*. An additional line was strung from the dining hall to the shower tree, enhancing the festive atmosphere. Our youngest volunteers, Kountry and Liam, happily posed for photos, adding to the spirit of the day.



The beautiful *koinobori* display was a bright and joyful sight enjoyed by both congregation members and visitors, serving as a heartwarming reminder that HJM remains active and committed to honoring and

supporting the next generation who will one day care for our temple.

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING RECAP

On April 27, 2025, HJM held its Annual Membership Meeting in the dining hall, successfully conducting a hybrid session despite some initial technical difficulties with the Zoom connection.

The meeting covered a wide range of updates, highlighting numerous accomplishments over the past year, including progress on long-standing repairs as well as ongoing challenges such as volunteer recruitment and fundraising efforts.

All seven proposed Bylaws amendments were unanimously approved by the membership through mailed-in ballots, with no opposing votes received.

It was noted that the day of the meeting held significance for HJM - it was the second anniversary of the all-female Executive Team being elected to their positions on the Board of Directors and serving the temple.

We extend our sincere thanks to everyone who attended and contributed to a productive meeting.

OTHER NOTEWORTHY HAPPENINGS

- In the past month, we have had the pleasure of hosting several international visitors, including two researchers, a businessman, a student, and an island hopper, all hailing from Japan.
- Congratulations to Dylan Matsui, son of HJM members Destry and Dawn Matsui, who will be graduating with honors from Waiakea High School later this month!

We are incredibly proud of his achievements and excited to see what lies ahead as he embarks on his college journey.

- Obon season is fast approaching, and the Big Island Buddhist Federation is currently finalizing the schedule for the Big Island's bon dances. We will share the complete schedule as soon as it is finalized and sent to us.
- A very Happy Birthday to our beloved *keiro* member, Sueichi Kawashima, who celebrated an incredible 97 years on May 13th! Here's to many more years of joy, health, and happiness ahead!
- We have received a revised billing for our assessment dues from the Hawaii Council of Jodo Missions, reflecting adjustments they made as part of their streamlined annual budget. However, we are still awaiting the itemized breakdown of expenses, as well as responses to the questions and concerns we previously raised.
- Our friends at the Honokaa Hongwanji Mission will be holding their annual garage sale event on June 22, 2025. Be sure to check it out!
- The Hawaii Jodo Shu Rengo Fujinkai and the Hawaii Council of Jodo Mission Layperson's Association hosted a statewide Zoom meeting last month. The Hawaii Jodo Shu Rengo Fujinkai will continue to accept applications for the Namiye Nakamura Scholarship through June 15, 2025.

For an application and more details on the qualifications, interested parties can contact the Betsuin office at (808) 949-3995.
- Are you aware that the State of Hawaii will be banning the sale of fluorescent light bulbs starting January 1, 2026? For HJM, this will mean that we will be transitioning our temple's veranda lighting to meet new requirements.
- Our monthly Beautification Work Day resumes on Sunday, May 25th. As summer approaches and temperatures rise, please remember to wear lightweight, comfortable

clothing and a hat. Staying hydrated is key, so don't forget to bring your water bottle!

IN MEMORIAM



Western Week 2023 outside the Hotel Honokaa Club
L-R: Annette, Woody, Elaine, and Jory

Last month, we were saddened to hear the news of the unexpected passing of a dear friend, Annette Lee, co-owner of the historic Hotel Honokaa Club. Over the years, many of our Bon Dance attendees from Hilo, Kona, and even off-island chose to stay at the hotel, drawn by its clean, affordable accommodations and welcoming atmosphere.

Annette and her life partner, Jory Watland, often joined us during our bon dance festivities, adding to the fun and memorable times we shared. She frequently referred her hotel guests to visit our temple and would sometimes accompany them herself, warmly supporting us in both word and presence.

We will miss her deeply and extend our sympathy to Jory and her family. *Namu Amida Butsu.*

DID YOU KNOW?

Did you know that the artwork of our temple was featured in the *Bon Dance Aloha* clothing line by Porter Classic, a renowned fashion house in Japan?

A few years ago, the father-and-son team, Katsuyuki and Leo Yoshida, unveiled this

special line as a tribute to the beloved bon dance tradition in Hawaii. The collection prominently showcases the unmistakable image of our temple, along with the word Honokaa printed on the fabric.

This limited edition line has long since sold out, but if you're lucky, you might still spot a piece listed on eBay from time to time!

Many of you may be familiar with Leo's name as the author of the best-selling Japanese book *Honokaa Boy*, which was later adapted into a successful film. The movie has garnered a dedicated following and continues to be screened occasionally at the Honokaa People's Theatre, where Leo himself worked as the theatre projectionist for six months.

Leo was in town in April and made a special stop at HJM to pay his respects at the gravesite of Beatrice Okamoto, who is interred in our cemetery, and to meet up with Dr. Crystal Moon, who serves as a Director on our Executive Team.

He also generously donated two framed photos to us: one captures Leo and his father wearing the aloha shirts and pants from the *Bon Dance Aloha* collection, and the other offers a close-up of the fabric's intricate design.

These photos will be proudly displayed in our dining hall, just in time to coincide with our Obon festivities!



Fabric design featuring HJM

A special thanks to Crystal for coordinating the visit and allowing us the opportunity to meet Leo. Our gratitude goes out to Leo for spending the day with us, learning about HJM and sharing cherished memories of Beatrice.

EXECUTIVE TEAM UPDATE

One of the recently approved amendments to the HJM Restated and Amended Bylaws allows members of the HJM Executive Team to hold multiple roles.

We are pleased to announce the updated slate of Officers and Directors, as follows:

Sandy Takahashi
President, Treasurer, and Director

Jan Kamiya
Vice President and Director

Nicole Garcia
Secretary and Director

Dr. Crystal Moon
Director

Kassie Tarpley
Director

The streamlining of the Executive Team has proven effective in enhancing efficiency and productivity, allowing them to allocate more time and focus to effectively address and organize various matters.

FROM THE ARCHIVES

Our effort to build a comprehensive archive of the history of HJM began in 2018 when our current Kyodan President, Sandy Takahashi, returned to the Big Island. She quickly recognized the lack of documented records, which raised concerns about preserving the history of our temple.

With many of the elders who held invaluable knowledge passing on, much of the information existed only in their memories and was not formally recorded. Sandy felt it was important for HJM to document and preserve this history, as well as conduct further research to fill in the gaps where information was lacking.

Through this process, we uncovered a wealth of fascinating and factual details about the

temple's history, and timelines began to take shape.



One notable discovery was the date when the bust of Rev. Gakuo Okabe was first installed in our front yard. The bust was erected on October 10, 1984, in commemoration of the 90th anniversary of Jodo Shu in Hawaii.

Rev. Okabe, who had been sent to Hawaii by the Hawaii Senkyokai to propagate the teachings of Jodo Shu, arrived on May 14th, 1894.

His work on the Big Island began in 1895, and the first Buddhist temple, now known as Hamakua Jodo Mission, was established in 1896, marking the beginning of a lasting legacy that continues to thrive today.

SUPPORTING SMALL BUSINESSES



SHIN INTERNATIONAL
CORPORATION

In the past, we've highlighted small businesses on the Big Island that we've worked with, but today, we'd like to take a moment to acknowledge Shin International Corporation, a

valued business partner from Japan with whom we've been working with for several years.

Although they are not a small business, we would be remiss not to acknowledge the outstanding services they have consistently provided to HJM.

If there's any company that exemplifies exceptional customer service, it's Shin International. Their team consistently delivers fast communication, efficient service, and high-quality products.

In particular, Tatsuji Maeda, our point of contact, stands out for his expertise in customer relations. He always responds promptly to our inquiries and questions, and has ensured the timely delivery of our tenugui for the bon dance year after year.

Mr. Maeda often goes above and beyond, exploring possible modifications to meet our needs, and he's available to assist us 7 days a week. Our experiences working with him and the entire Shin International team have been nothing short of positive, and we look forward to continuing this strong business relationship for many years to come.

FLASHBACK PHOTO OF THE MONTH

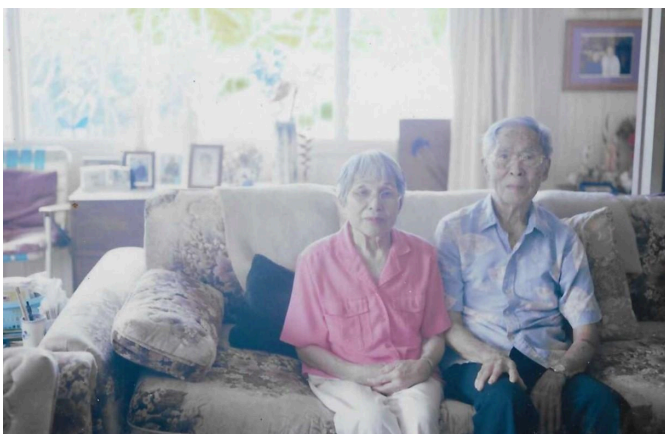


Photo from the Fujitani Family Collection

Captured on August 18, 2006, by a Japanese visitor, this photo features Yutaka "Doc" Doi and his wife Margie in their Honokaa home. Though they were unable to meet the visitor in person at the temple, she decided to visit their home

during her vacation on the Big Island to "talk story" and reconnect.

Both Doc and Margie were dedicated members of our temple. Doc's father, Toyozo, was a founding member of HJM, and Doc himself, a retired laboratory supervisor at Hamakua Sugar Company, grew up attending HJM and later served as our long-time treasurer, expertly managing our finances. Margie was deeply involved as a member of the *Fujinkai* and HJM's *goeika* group.

It's heartwarming to see how many visitors, from both near and far, return to HJM over the years, often seeking out connections with the elder members they once befriended.

While many of these beloved individuals have since passed, this reunion with the Doi family stands as a beautiful reminder of the lasting bonds formed at our temple.

Note: There were handwritten notes on the back of the photo, however the name of the Japanese visitor was not listed.

YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED



We received a question this month about the content of our newsletter and why certain topics are not reported.

"Why are some items happening at the moment not included in the newsletter?" - A.H.

Thank you for your question! We strive to include as much information as possible in our newsletter, but we must exercise discretion when deciding what to feature.

Since the newsletter is posted on our website and accessible to the public, we are mindful of the types of details we share.

Some matters, such as ongoing research or negotiations, are handled internally by the HJM Executive Team, and updates on them will be shared once a resolution or conclusion is reached based on the nature of each situation.

Additionally, certain information may be withheld for security reasons. For example, if HJM were to make a purchase of office equipment, we might not publicly mention it to avoid drawing unwanted attention that could lead to theft.

We aim to strike a careful balance in what we report in a public forum, and we encourage members to reach out directly to the Executive Team if they have any questions or would like to discuss any ongoing developments at the temple. We appreciate your understanding!



IN APPRECIATION

We want to acknowledge those who generously gifted us with monetary donations:

Rev. Marcos Jinen Sawada, Sandra Miranda, and R. Sakata Insurance.

Membership dues received:

Sandra Kimura and Iris Nakagawa.

UPCOMING EVENTS & SERVICES SCHEDULE

<u>DATE</u>	<u>EVENT</u>	<u>TIME</u>
5/25/25	Beautification Work Day	8:00am
8/03/25	Obon General Cleaning & Set Up Day	8:00am
8/09/25	Obon Gravesite Service	5:00pm
	Obon Indoor Service	6:00pm
	Bon Dance	7:00pm
8/10/25	Post-Obon Clean-Up & Tear Down Day	8:00am
11/01/25	TBA	TBA

These are events and services that have been confirmed by HJM's Executive Team. If you have made arrangements for a service or event and do not see it listed, please leave a message at (808) 775-0965 or send an email to: hamakuajodoexecteam@gmail.com

This calendar is being provided to avoid visitors from stopping by during private functions/services, and to prevent double bookings.

VOLUNTEERS WANTED

At HJM, we are steadfast in our commitment to preserving our temple and grounds, but we can't do it alone. We **NEED** your help.

You don't have to be a member to volunteer; every helping hand is valued, and every effort, no matter how small, makes a significant difference.

For those with loved ones whose final resting place is at HJM, we kindly ask you to consider helping us maintain their gravesites. Caring for

them honors the memory of those who came before us, ensuring their legacy lives on in a place that reflects the respect and reverence they deserve.

If you are unable to volunteer your time, we humbly ask for your support through a donation. The growing costs of maintaining our temple and grounds are a challenge, but with your generosity, we can continue to preserve HJM for future generations to enjoy.

Your contribution, whether through time or financial support, helps us keep our temple and grounds safe, beautiful, and welcoming for all. Thank you for your commitment to preserving the legacy of HJM and honoring the memories of those who have come before us. *Okage sama de!*

If you are interested in volunteering at HJM, please reach out to us at (808) 775-0965 or by emailing: contact@hamakuajodomission.org

CONTACT INFORMATION REQUEST

If you've changed your mailing address, email, or phone number, please let us know by calling us at (808) 775-0965 or sending us an email to: contact@hamakuajodomission.org so we can keep our records current and ensure you stay informed.

Your kokua is greatly appreciated!

CONTRIBUTIONS & SUBMISSIONS

Whether it's a story you'd like to tell, a photo that captures a special moment, or a suggestion you believe could enhance our temple, we welcome your contributions for our newsletter! We also encourage Letters to the Editor if you have any feedback or thoughts to share. Your voice matters to us.

Please submit your materials in Word, PDF, JPEG, or PNG formats by the 15th of each month. Send your contributions to: contact@hamakuajodomission.org

If you don't have access to the internet, feel free to send them via USPS to us, too!

2025 OBON CELEBRATION

Mark your calendars - our Obon Celebration is confirmed for **Saturday, August 9, 2025!**

Join us for an evening honoring our ancestors starting with a gravesite service at 5:00pm, followed by an indoor service at 6:00pm, and then our bon dance at 7:00pm.

Expect a night filled with educational exhibits, exciting activities, delicious food trucks, door prizes, and plenty of camaraderie!

We're seeking responsible and dedicated volunteers to assist with setup and booth activities. If you'd like to join the team, we'd love to hear from you!

Please feel free to send us an email to: contact@hamakuajodomission.org or call us at (808) 775-0965.

Mahalo for reading & your continued support!

*- The Hamakua Jodo Mission
Newsletter Committee*

*"Success is not measured by the destination,
but by the courage to keep moving forward,
even when the path is uncertain." - Unknown*

For those of you that have email addresses but receive our newsletters via USPS, please consider saving a tree and a stamp by receiving them electronically. Sign up by sending an email to: contact@hamakuajodomission.org

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Hamakua Jodo Mission

*The First Sanctioned Buddhist Temple Built in
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