



## Arizona JACL History

Growing from a small community gathering hall in 1930, to one of the strongest Asian American organizations in Arizona, the Arizona Chapter of the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) has served as a source of social change and community activism for 75 years. Officially founded in 1934, the JACL Arizona Chapter now boasts more than 300 diverse members, from Nisei to Gosei (2nd- to 5th-generation Japanese Americans) and a variety of ethnic backgrounds. The Nisei have served as the core leaders of the Arizona Chapter, ensuring both its growth and its success.

Throughout the 1950s, the Chapter was engaged in combating the injustices that prevailed after World War II. As the Chapter grew, it focused on Japanese American populations of all ages. The Chapter established Chojukai, a social organization founded in 1959 for Japanese Americans over the age of 55 and hosts monthly events at its hall. In 1962, the Chapter inaugurated the Sara Hutchings Clardy Scholarship Awards for graduating high school seniors, and it continues to provide college scholarships each year. A new community building, located in Glendale, was dedicated in 1977. The Chapter was a founding member of the Matsuri Festival, the oldest Asian American festival in Arizona, established in 1984. In 1997, the Japanese Senior Center, a collaboration between JACL, YWCA, United Way, City of Glendale Community Development, and the Area Agency on Aging, Region One, was started through the dedicated efforts of the late John Kinoshita and Mary Tadano.

In 2002 the Arizona Chapter received the National JACL George J. Inagaki Citizenship Award, presented to the JACL Chapter that exemplifies Citizenship through community and social activities that result in the betterment of society as a whole. The Chapter is especially active in raising awareness and preserving the history of Japanese Americans in Arizona. In 2002 the Chapter hosted a tribute to the Japanese American flower growers, who have served the Phoenix community for more than 60 years. Since 2003 the Chapter has collaborated with Arizona State University on the Japanese Americans in Arizona Oral History Project, gathering the stories of the early generations of Japanese Americans who settled in the state. The Chapter hosted the National JACL Convention in 2006 at Gila River, the site of one of the largest internment camps in the country, and dedicated a memorial to the internees at the Gila River Arts and Crafts Center, where the Chapter also maintains a display about internment and Nisei soldiers. The Chapter supports educational activities, such as teacher workshops on the Japanese American internment experience. Other cultural and social activities, including an annual picnic, community service projects, and cooking and craft events, are held throughout the year. The JACL Arizona Chapter will continue to develop as a dynamic organization rooted in strong history and committed to the future.