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NEWS RELEASE

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Photos available at: <http://asiancelebration.org/media/>

For Immediate Release

**Yujin Gakuen Japanese Immersion School Celebrates 28 Years
of Performing at the Oregon Asian Celebration
February 20 & 21, 2016
Lane Events Center, Eugene OR**

Share the fun, we're 31 is the theme of this year's Oregon Asian Celebration. Students of the Yujin Gakuen Japanese Immersion School will have performed at 28 of those years by the conclusion of the event planned for February 20th and 21st at the Lane Events Center in Eugene.

The first performance featured 25 students in 1989, a year after the school officially opened in the Eugene School District as the nation's first Japanese immersion elementary school.

According to Nancy Imamura, of the Yujin Gakuen Immersion School, "That first year, the tiny voices of the first graders on stage were barely heard. But their stage presence endeared the audience and the students continued to make an appearance on the Main Stage each year. "

Performances have expanded from singing Japanese folk songs to performing Japanese dances, and taiko drumming. "Performing at the festival presented a wonderful opportunity for students to expand on their Japanese language skills, and also learn about traditional customs through dance and music," Imamura says.

As the school population continued to grow, so did the number of students performing at the annual festival. For many years, performances involved the entire student body. "But today, the student body of 295 students in grades K-5 makes managing the practices and performances more difficult, so the annual festival limits performances to students in kindergarten, second, and fifth grade," Imamura says. "Performing at the event is always something the students are excited about and look forward to doing."

Traditional dances such as "Momotaro" and "Ehigasa (Umbrella Dance)" are performed by second graders and the fifth grade girls dance "Sakura" and "Onoenomatsu" under the tutelage of Jemai Suematsu and Kameo Mami

“Around 10 years ago, the school added taiko to their Asian Celebration program and with drumming performed by the second and fifth graders.” Imamura says.

Students dress in traditional Japanese attire that is appropriate for the song or dance that is being performed. “For the 31st Oregon Asian Celebration, Yujin Gakuen’s talented Japanese teachers Kumiko Vanderbush and Takako Schneider have arranged a delightful new medley of songs entitled “Sakura Fubuki”. The performance will feature four new taiko drums and sensu (fans), which were acquired by a generous \$5,000 grant from the United States-Japan Foundation.”

Practice occurs all through fall and winter in preparation for performances. The Oregon Asian Celebration is the largest event, and festival visitors will be treated on Saturday, February 20th at 10:50 a.m. to Yujin Gakuen’s 61 kindergartners performing three traditional Japanese songs on the Main Stage. Other performances occur throughout the year, including Japan Night at the University of Oregon, Family Days at the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art and at the Asian Kite Festival /Kodomonohi (Children’s Day) each May at the school.

“Yujin Gakuen is grateful for the support of its parents and the greater Eugene and Springfield communities and proud to celebrate our 28th year as part of the Eugene 4J School District and as a participant of the Oregon Asian Celebration,” Imamura said.

The festival opens at 10:00 a.m. on both days, and closes at 7:00 p.m. on Saturday and 6:00 p.m. on Sunday.

Admission is \$6 or \$10 for a 2-day ticket; free for ages 12 & under, and free for ages 13 and older, (including college students) when presenting valid student ID card and student admission ticket obtained at any Oregon Community Credit Union branch beginning January 27. Admission tickets can also be purchased in advance at any Oregon Community Credit Union branch.

A complete schedule of activities and performances will be available at the door or at AsianCelebration.org.

The event is supported by the following sponsors: University of Oregon, Oregon Community Credit Union, Kaiser Permanente, Kikkoman USA, Imagination International, McDonalds, the City of Eugene, and KVAL-TV.

The event is produced by the [Eugene/Springfield Asian Council](http://Eugene/SpringfieldAsianCouncil) whose mission is to create opportunities that foster greater understanding of Asian and Asian American cultures by presenting special events and activities to promote friendship and harmonious relationships.

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