

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

### **18<sup>th</sup> Annual Houston JAPAN FESTIVAL at Hermann Park on Saturday, April 10, and Sunday, April 11, 2010, to feature Japanese Foods, Martial Arts, Cultural Exhibits, Traditional Music, and Dance Performances.**

**Houston, Texas March 15, 2010** – Thousands of Houstonians are expected to flock to Houston's Hermann Park near the Japanese Garden to enjoy the 18<sup>th</sup> Annual Japan Festival, Saturday and Sunday, April 10th and 11th, 2010. Organized by the Japan-America Society of Houston (JASH) with the generous support of the City of Houston Parks and Recreation Department, the Consulate General of Japan, the Japan Business Association of Houston, the Japanese Association of Greater Houston, the Japanese American Citizens League, JPMorgan Chase, Continental Airlines, Centerpoint Energy, Gulf States Toyota, and many other sponsors, performers and volunteers, the Japan Festival will be held at Hermann Park in the Museum District from 11 a.m. – 6 p.m. each day.

*The annual Japan Festival was the recipient of the "2009 Best Festival in Houston Award" by the Houston Press and public admission to the Festival is free.*

The impeccably groomed areas around the Japanese Garden will be transformed into a bustling Japanese village. Two stages, a Performance Stage and a Martial Arts Stage will showcase a rich variety of Japanese music, including taiko drumming, traditional dance and exciting martial arts. Adjacent areas of the park will feature several local restaurants including popular Japanese eateries, serving a variety of gastronomical delights including sushi and many other favorites.

*Festival guests will enjoy the exciting performances of taiko drumming and demonstrations of world-class Japanese sword cutting.*

The 2010 Japan Festival will feature two days of performances by the always popular and energetic taiko drumming of Houston's own Kaminari Taiko. The compelling percussive rhythms of the drums and high energy always adds up to an intense and riveting performance the audience hears, sees, and feels before you even enter the Festival grounds.

The Festival is hosting the annual tournament between the Kendo Teams of Texas A&M University and the University of Texas. Kendo is the modern Japanese martial art of sword-fighting, where opponents use bamboo swords and protective body armor to fight each other with full contact intensity. The Festival will also feature exciting world-class martial arts performances from some of the most expert Japanese-style martial artists in the world. This year's special feature martial arts demonstration is "tameshigiri". Rarely demonstrated outside of Japan, tameshigiri is the exciting and intense Japanese sword art of cutting through wet rolled straw mats and baseballs with a true Japanese katana's razor sharp precise strikes that happen in the flash of a split-second. A challenge to the Tameshigiri World Record accomplished at 2009 Japan Festival will be attempted on stage this year.

*Another very special feature at this year's Festival is the stunningly beautiful and amazingly ornate, traditional Japanese art of flower arrangement called Ikebana.*

The Festival will also feature Bunraku, the centuries-old Japanese art of theatrical puppetry, which will delight Houstonians of all ages with their magnificent performances. The Festival is also pleased to have Mr. Maki Kaji, the Japanese inventor who unleashed the phenomenally popular game of Sudoku onto the world, available to chat and visit with the public. Other events and activities will include: Children's Games, Tea Ceremony demonstrations, Bonsai exhibits, a real "Gong Show", and the always curiously popular Anime Cosplay Contest.

Due to limited parking availability at Hermann Park, The Japan Festival encourages all visitors to consider alternative transportation or to ride the METRO Rail to the "Hermann Park/Rice U" Station. For more information about METRO Rail, including METRO parking, please visit [www.ridemetro.org](http://www.ridemetro.org) or call 713-635-4000.

**Japan Festival 2010 schedules, performers, sponsors, and other information can be found by visiting: [www.japan-fest.com](http://www.japan-fest.com). For additional information, please contact the JASH office by phone at (713) 963-0121 or by email at [japa61@Japan-Fest.com](mailto:japa61@Japan-Fest.com).**

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*The Japan America Society of Houston (JASH) is a 501(c)3 organization incorporated in 1968 to provide a non-political forum for discussion of issues between the United States and Japan and to promote greater cultural understanding between the people of both countries. The mission of JASH is to provide programs which increase the knowledge and understanding of Japan by Americans, and to encourage communication between Japanese and American people.*