

Japan America Society of Minnesota



通 信

The Tsūshin is a membership publication of the Japan America Society of Minnesota

March 2021 Vol. 30, No. 3

Recap: Virtual J-Quiz 2021



Memorial High School Level 4 1st place winners

Hiroko Nagai, Memorial High School teacher of Japanese (top middle); Rio Saito, JASM Executive Director (bottom middle); and Elizabeth Fehrmann, JASM President (bottom right)

On Saturday, February 20th, JASM held its highly anticipated annual event, J-Quiz, gathering 40 high school students across high schools in Minnesota (three) and Wisconsin (one). They competed in a battle of cultural knowledge and understanding of Japan for a chance to advance to the 29th National Japan Bowl later this year. Unlike previous years, this J-Quiz was held online because of the pandemic and did not include Level I. However, this did not change our goal of spreading cultural awareness and bringing together students who are interested in Japan. This event was organized by JASM in cooperation with the Minnesota Council of Teachers of Japanese (MCTJ), with the support of the Consulate-General of Japan in Chicago.



*Consul-General
Okada*



*Elizabeth
Fehrmann, JASM
President*

The event began with the opening ceremony, following online student check-in. JASM Executive Director Rio Saito opened with a warm welcome to all the students before giving a quick rundown of how to navigate the event online. Next, JASM President Elizabeth Fehrmann acknowledged those who make J-Quiz possible. Afterwards, we received a surprise greeting from the Honorable Consul-General of Japan in Chicago, Consul-General Kenichi Okada, who is thankful for the commitment of JASM, the teachers, and the students in supporting events like J-Quiz.

The students then competed out of the public eye in groups of two to three. They were tested on a diversity of Japanese language and cultural questions, ranging from general reading and listening to idiomatic expressions. In addition, the students were offered various cultural presentations to view outside of their respective test period.

...continued on page 5

Upcoming: Virtual Corporate Roundtable North Dakota Edition

Please join us on **March 9th from 3-4pm** as North Dakota farmer and businessman Bob Sinner shares how he and his partners diversified their family farming business to take advantage of growing and unique agricultural trade opportunities abroad — specifically with the country of Japan.



Mr. Robert Sinner

Building on a family farming heritage begun in 1906, SB&B Foods, LLC has expanded by creating an international business to supply food-quality soybeans and other food-grade commodities directly to food manufacturers. Bob will share his experiences working with Japanese customers. He'll describe how upper Midwest farmers provide key ingredients for Japanese products (including tofu produced in Japan that's named after Bob).

Bob will also share insights on relationship management, leveraging advantages of North Dakota's agricultural capabilities, taking advantage of IP trends, and navigating current challenges and opportunities in international trade.

Robert (Bob) Sinner has spent his entire life in North Dakota. After graduating from North Dakota State University with a degree in agricultural economics, Bob joined the family farming operation. Before SB&B actively pursued expansion into international business, Bob served on the executive committee of the United Soybean Board and as chairman of its International Promotion Committee. In 1989, SB&B expanded by creating an international business to supply food-quality soybeans and later other food-grade commodities to manufacturers globally. Japan has been a primary market, with some unique success in the tofu industry.

...continued on page 2

Click [here](#) to register!



JASM Fundraising Opportunity with "ShopWithScrip"

2020 was a challenging year for JASM, along with most nonprofit organizations across the country. Thanks to your generous support during these troubling times, JASM has been able to forge forward, fulfilling our mission of building bridges between the people of Minnesota and Japan. However, as a small nonprofit focused on education, arts, and cultural services, JASM remains very vulnerable.

We are asked every day to make charitable donations to worthy causes from limited resources. However, this is not another request for a donation. Well, kind of... What if there was a way to help raise funds for JASM just by leading your normal life, making standard purchases? Well, there is!


With the RaiseRight mobile app by ShopWithScrip you can help raise money for JASM doing everyday activities, like buying groceries, gas, shopping on Amazon, or getting your morning Caribou or Starbucks. This is done by buying gift cards for local merchants via the app. You receive the full value of the card while a percentage is also donated to JASM.

I am amongst a couple JASM members who have been using this service for several months and find it a fun, fast, and easy way to support JASM while I go about my daily life. With just one or two of us taking advantage of this fundraising activity, the impact is understandably small. But what if 10, 20, 50, 100 members chipped in? That would make a HUGE impact and help secure the survival of JASM long into the future.

Please give me a call or send me an email if you are interested in learning more about how you can help support JASM via your daily purchases!

Marc Blehert
mblehert@yahoo.com, 763-280-2108

If you would like to order physical gift card through ShopWithScrip, please contact jasm@us-japan.org



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- Link your bank account to enroll in online payments and place your first order.

Have a question? Contact our coordinator at: 612-627-9357

Please click [here](#) to download the flyer above.

Upcoming: Virtual Corporate Roundtable North Dakota Edition *continues...*

Bob serves as President of both [SB&B Foods](#), the company marketing entity, and Identity Ag Processing, the state-of-the-art processing company, with two locations. In 2007, SB&B Foods received the North Dakota Exporter of the Year Award. In 2009, SB&B was presented with the North Dakota Entrepreneur of the Year Award. Bob currently serves as president of SSGA (Specialty Soya & Grains Alliance), a national association of identity-preserved agriculture food ingredient suppliers. He remains active in a variety of civic, state, regional, and national organizations including the North Dakota Trade Office board and the National Agriculture Transportation Coalition advisory board. His three sons are also involved in the business.

The [Web Labo Co-op](#) website (in Japanese) showcases Japanese products made using North Dakota commodities, including a tofu variety named after Bob Sinner.

Click [here](#) to register! We look forward to seeing you there.

This event is free thanks to the sponsorship provided by the National Association of Japan America Societies (NAJAS) and the Embassy of Japan.



Supporting organization: North Dakota Trade Office.



Membership News (1/21-2/20, 2021)

Thanks to the following new JASM members:

Aaron Eastwood, Jose Rivera,
Shigeki Yatsuya

Thanks to the following renewing JASM members:

Christine Faust, Karen, Harwerth,
Laura Johnson, Hisayo and Bob Luck,
Miechelle Norman,
Gregory and Mino Schuneman,

Thanks to the following renewing Corporate members:

Red Wing Sister Cities Commission

Upcoming: Shinshunkai (新春会) - Online Spring Festival

On Sunday, March 14th 3:00pm-5:00pm in place of Shinnenkai this year, we will be holding an online entertainment event for Shinshunkai, or the spring festival. We would like you all to join us! We will have variety of performers online using *Hopin*. You can enjoy many different talents during this event.

\$8: Member \$10: Non-member

Please sign up today! (Click [here](#) to register.) *The ticket is not refundable, but transferable.*



The event performers include:

Damien "Nijiya" D'Luxe is a local non-binary half Japanese drag king, known nationwide. He has been performing for 17 years and was a cast member of #dragrevolution and Black Hearts Burlesque at Lush in Minneapolis. He performs most often with with Dragged Out (an all-kings show in St. Paul) and Flip Phone. He is the "Asian for every occasion" and is known for his transformative makeup and style, through cosplay and impersonations.

Kazha is a rock band founded in 2009 by Japanese singer-songwriter Kazuha Oda (Kazha) and guitarist Hideki Matsushige. Kazuha Oda is a classically trained singer who has worked in genres of music from classical to metal. Her work has appeared on the iTunes Top 100 charts of numerous countries. She is an Official Ambassador of "Music Export Memphis" and is touring nationally, representing the birthplace of rock'n'roll, Memphis, Tennessee. *Kazha* represents a future of music: a fusion of cultures and musical viewpoints.



Kendama Institute



Tomoko Stubbings

Obi is beautiful, and also fun! I hope this demonstration will help you to enjoy more of kimono!

Kimono Studio by Rin



Tomoko Drake: Dango-making
Tomoko Drake, a baker in the Twin Cities, will teach us how to make dango.



Yuki Tokuda is a ballet dancer and choreographer based in Twin Cities. She is originally from Shiga and has lived in Minnesota for more than 10 years. She's been dancing more than 30 years, collaborating with other artists and companies. The featured piece is an excerpt from *Yumé*, on which Tokada collaborated with composer Asako Hirabayashi. The music is from the opera *Rusalka* by Antonin Dvorak. *Rusalka* is the daughter of a water-goblin who wants to become human after she falls in love with a prince. She sings "Song to the Moon," asking the moon to reveal her love to the prince. Music performed by **Momoko Tanno** and **Asako Hirabayashi**.

This event is sponsored by

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arts
council

*Please thank our members
with your support!*

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Winona State University Global Studies Dept.



Recap: Whiskey Tasting with Chris Uhde



On Thursday, February 25, JASM held a virtual whiskey tasting event, exploring and sampling five different Japanese whiskeys. The event was led by Chris Uhde, Vice President and Co-Owner of ImpEx Beverages Inc. He has had many experiences with Japanese whiskey over his twelve years of travel in the industry, including his role as the chief blender of Fukano Whisky.



Mr. Chris Uhde

The spirits featured were as follows:

- Fukano Vault 2
- Ohishi Sherry
- Ohishi Brandy (10 years old)
- Tottori Ex-Bourbon
- Kurayoshi 12 Pure Malt

We started with Fukano Vault 2, a rice whiskey produced by Fukano Whisky in Hitoyoshi, Kumamoto Prefecture in rural Kyushu. The distillery is 7th generation owned

and was founded in 1823. After mentioning some of the distillery's history, Chris emphasized the very down-to-earth family environment present throughout the production cycle.

The next two drinks, Ohishi Sherry and Ohishi Brandy Tenure, are both products of 6th generation-owned Ohishi Whisky located in Mizukami-Mura, Kumamoto. Chris highlighted the absolute remoteness of the distillery, which dates back to 1872. In addition, he mentioned that all of the rice used in their production is locally grown, 30% grown by Ohishi-san and 70% by local farmers. He went into further detail on the science behind Ohishi Whisky's unique fermentation process.



The fourth and last drinks, Tottori Ex-Bourbon and Kurayoshi 12, were made by Matsui Whisky's Kurayoshi Distillery in Kurayoshi, Tottori Prefecture. Chris emphasized the world-renowned quality of the distillery's whisky. He further explained how Matsui makes great use of a natural aquifer for their water. The aquifer sits at the foot of Mt. Daisen.

We would like to extend great thanks to Chris and South Lyndale Liquors for this very interesting presentation, as well as ImpEx Beverages for sponsoring this event.



Recap: Virtual J-Quiz 2021 *continues...*

The topics may be familiar to many of JASM's members, as they were recordings of recent JASM events.

The presentation topics were Yoshitoshi *ukiyo-e*, dream books, and karate. Sato Tsubasa-sensei of Eastview High School also put together a collection of Japan-related videos with subjects ranging from music to travel for everyone to enjoy. Before the ending ceremony, everyone got together to compete in a fun *Kahoot!* quiz composed largely of questions written by the students.

While results were being tabulated, Honorary Consul-General of Japan in MN, ND, and SD, Ron Leonhardt, shared his thoughts on the strengths of language learning and thanked the teachers for their hard work.



Honorary Consul
Ron Leonhardt

Of the 14 teams that competed, one each from Levels II, III, and IV won and advanced to the 29th National Japan Bowl.

The winners for this year's J-Quiz are as follows:

Level II: Shakopee High School, Gideon Antwi, Teagan Bauschke, and Julia Hastings

Level III: Shakopee High School, Lyn Nguyen, Minh Thu Duong, and Brooke Sorah

Level IV: Memorial High School, Emily Fletcher, Pa Jai Khang, and Mai See Yang

JASM would like to congratulate not only the winning teams, but also all of this year's competitors. The student participants displayed their strong drive and scholarly efforts throughout the competition.

We would like to thank all the sponsors, supporters, and volunteers (listed on page 5) who made J-Quiz 2021 possible and successful.



(Top from left) Elizabeth Fehrmann, JASM President; Rio Saito, JASM Executive Director; and Naomi Satoh, Shakopee High School teacher of Japanese.

(bottom) Shakopee High School Level 2 1st place winners



Shakopee High School Level 3 1st place winners; Elizabeth Fehrmann, JASM President (top left); Naomi Satoh, Shakopee High School teacher of Japanese (top middle); and Rio Saito, JASM Executive Director (bottom left)

Recap: Virtual J-Quiz 2021 *continues...*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The J-Quiz is organized by the Japan America Society of Minnesota in cooperation with the Minnesota Council of Teachers of Japanese. JASM would like to thank the following supporters:

Minnesota Council of Teachers of Japanese
For planning the event and helping their students prepare

Consulate-General of Japan in Chicago
For sponsoring the event

Michiko Kato Dressen, Hiroko Shade
J-Quiz Planning Committee Co-Chairs

**Kyoko French, Keiko Kawakami, Rio Saito,
Naomi Satoh, Yoko Ueno**
J-Quiz Planning Committee

**Michiko Kato Dressen, Keiko Kawakami,
Fusako Muro, Miho Nagai**
Question Preparation

Hiroko Shade
Volunteer Coordinator

**Natsuko Dieterle, Sachiko Dorsey, Fumiko
Matsumoto, Satomi Mitani, Fusako Muro,
Miho Nagai, Ritsuko Narita, Michael Toole**
Graders and Moderators

We are grateful to these generous sponsors:

Dorsey & Whitney, LLP

The Japan Foundation — Los Angeles

Ron Leonhardt

Taiyo International, Inc.

Temple University, Japan Campus

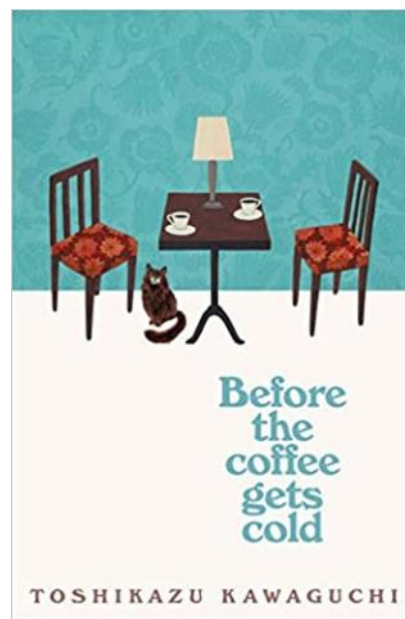
Saji Ya Restaurant

The Ken Port Scholarship supports the Japan
Bowl expenses for the Level 4 team winners.



Tom Haeg's Book Review

Before the Coffee Gets Cold; Toshikazu Kawaguchi, Hanover Square Press, 2015; Picador edition, 2019; English translation by Geoffrey Trousselot.



Since Meiji era there is a fascination in Japanese literature for coffeehouses. They represent a peculiar tether to Western sophisticated living. Drinking coffee is regarded as escapist chic. Not that they have supplanted the traditional tea house - they haven't; yet they seem to exude an aura of surreal mysticism.

Before the Coffee Gets Cold continues this spiritual tradition with a magical realism undertone. Here, our welcoming café, Funiculi Funicula, ensconced in a Tokyo back alley, serves up a cup of Joe while enabling its customers to experience a dreamlike time-travel experience. Kawaguchi cleverly divides the novel into four parts: The Lovers (unrequited love), Husband and Wife (everlasting love), The Sisters (redemptive love), and Mother and Child (maternal love). Each of the café's customers embarks on their time-travel sojourn so long as they obey certain rules (e.g., they must sit on a certain stool, the journey cannot affect the present, the encounter will end once the coffee gets cold, etc.). Who they meet and what they discuss is the plot. The charm is in the conversations' intimacy, serving to achieve a relationship.

For our JASM reader, the book poses three existential questions: *if* you could travel in time: *who* would you want to meet? *why* do you want to meet them? and *what* do you want to talk about? Although the fixed rule is that the present cannot be changed, you as the time-traveler will assuredly experience a heightened appreciation for the tenderness of the human relationship. And, as a result, you will be better for it. Think of it as a second chance to form a relationship.

This is Kawaguchi's debut novel. He is better known as an accomplished playwright. In fact, *Before the Coffee Gets Cold* won him the top prize at the Sugunami Drama Festival while its silver screen version earned great reviews from Japanese film critics. (Watch the trailer: <https://youtu.be/bFUOxEwpKr0>) A sequel, *Before the Coffee Gets Cold: Tales from the Cafe* is also available from Picador.

Tom Haeg

臨時領事事務所開設のお知らせ (3月分)

新型コロナウイルス感染に伴い、当館管轄10州のうち、アイオワ州、カンザス州、ミズーリ州、ネブラスカ州、ノースダコタ州、サウスダコタ州、ウィスコンシン州、ミネソタ州及びインディアナ州にお住まいの方が当館にお越しいただくことが実質的に困難になる中、当館ではこれらの州にお住まいの皆さまを対象に領事サービスの提供を継続するため、以下のとおり臨時事務所を開設します。

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電話番号：312 (280) 0400

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【開設日】

●2021年3月11日（木）（申請書類等を郵送する場合の当館必着日：2月24日（水））

●2021年3月24日（水）（申請書類等を郵送する場合の当館必着日：3月9日（火））

【開設時間】

10時30分から12時15分及び

13時15分から15時まで

【会場】

Double Tree by Hilton Hotel Chicago Oak Brook

1909 Spring Road Oak Brook, IL 60523

TEL:630(472)6000

【当館連絡先】

Tel:(312)280-0400 (24時間対応) (注)、Fax: (312) 280-9568 Email: ryoji1@cg.mofa.go.jp

(注) コロナウイルス感染症予防のため、現在業務体制を縮小しております。平日午前9時15分から午後5時までは音声案内に従って操作しますと担当部門につながります。土曜・日曜・祝祭日、平日午後5時以降、翌日午前9時15分まで（事件、事故、その他緊急の用件）は、音声に従って操作しますと、閉館時の緊急電話受付につながります。

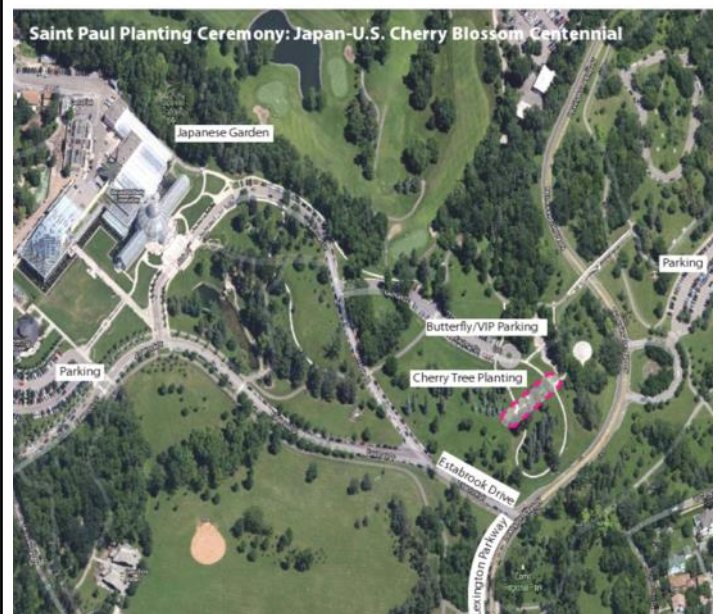
When will the cherries bloom? Contest



In 2012, Japan presented the city of St. Paul with twenty sakura (cherry trees) in honor of the long sister city relationship of Saint Paul and Nagasaki and the 100th anniversary of the gift of cherry trees to Washington, D. C. , in 1912. Each year the Saint Paul - Nagasaki Sister City Committee (SPNSCC) sponsors a contest with prizes for the person/s who guesses the date of the first blossoms. This contest is open to all, with the winner announced by June 1. The contest is presently open by going to the [SPNSCC Facebook page](#); it closes on March 31.

SPNSCC is encouraging people to visit the sakura grove once they bloom and bring your own hanami (picnic) to eat under the trees. The trees are located off the Butterfly Parking Lot across from the Global Harmony Labyrinth. Two rows of trees are planted by the steps leading up to the Mannheimer Memorial and in a semi-circle at the top of that hill. (See map below)

JoAnn Blatchley, Co-President, Saint Paul - Nagasaki Sister City Committee



Fukushima: 10 Years Later

Saint Paul - Nagasaki Sister City Committee

Zoom event, Friday, March 12, 2021 at 7 pm CST (link below)

Special guest: Paul Sprigg, live from Fukushima

Join us for a memorial event on March 12th, 2021, at 7 pm CST as we remember the Great Tohoku Earthquake and Tsunami that ravaged Japan on March 11th, 2011. To remember the tragedy that befell the people of Japan that day, we invite you to watch a variety of documentaries that illustrate the disaster as well as describe the aftermath, with stories of how the people of Fukushima and the greater Tohoku region have recovered. In addition, we will feature an American guest speaker, Paul Sprigg, live from Fukushima (where he resides). Paul can answer your questions and describe what Fukushima is like today. We will close with "Hana wa saku" which was commissioned by NHK to honor the victims of the tragedy.

Sponsored by the Saint Paul – Nagasaki Sister City Committee.

Zoom link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89893439626?pwd=c041SEtMzk3b2s1MmxvN2Jqc081Zz09>

Meeting ID: 898 9343 9626

Passcode: 600515

JoAnn Blatchley
Co-President, Saint Paul -
Nagasaki Sister City Committee



Photo courtesy of University of Portsmouth, UK

Calendar

March

Virtual Corporate Roundtable, North Dakota
Edition, **March 9th**

Shinshunkai (新春会)-Spring Festival, **March 14**

Become a JASM Member online

Support our mission and become a member!

1. Go to mn-japan.org
 2. At the top, hover over 'Support' then click on 'Join'
 3. Select your membership type and read the benefits and instructions.
- You can also become a member using your smartphone.

Japanese Conversation Clubs



The Japanese Speaking Club is an informal meeting for those wishing to practice Japanese. We encourage those just beginning the language as well as native speakers to participate to meet new people, discuss experiences in Japan, or simply to speak Japanese.

This group currently meets regularly over Zoom. For more details, send an email to group coordinator Will Etkin:
will.etkin@twincitiesjapaneseconversation.com

Check out another conversation group: **Twin Cities Japanese Conversation Meetup Group** (<https://www.twincitiesjapaneseconversation.com/>)

Note: This is a private group. In order to join, a questionnaire must be completed at the web site linked above.

The goal of Twin Cities Japanese Conversation Meetup is language fluency in either Japanese or English. This group is for Japanese language learners who want to improve their Japanese speaking skills or/and native Japanese speakers who want to improve their English speaking. Those who just want to help out are also welcome.

Parts to the meetup: 自己紹介 (self-introductions), 質疑応答 (questions and answers about language) and 会話練習 (conversation practice).

Meetings: Edina (Monday), Minnetonka (Thursday), Saint Paul (Saturday).

Since March 16 the group is holding all meetings online.

For any question about this group, please email Mariquita Anderson: mariquita@twincitiesjapaneseconversation.com



J | A | S | M

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通信

Tsūshin
March 2021

The Japan America Society of Minnesota is a non-profit, non-political association engaged in bringing the peoples of Japan and the United States closer together in mutual understanding, respect, and cooperation. Through programs and interchange, it endeavors to promote an appreciation of cultural, educational, economic, public, and other affairs of interest to both peoples. Membership in the society is open to individuals, corporations, and other organizations interested in furthering its programs.

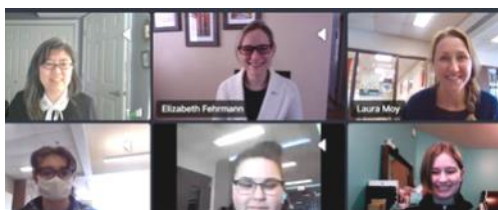
The Japan America Society of Minnesota is a member of the National Association of Japan-America Societies.

Please report any inaccuracies you find in this publication to jasm@us-japan.com

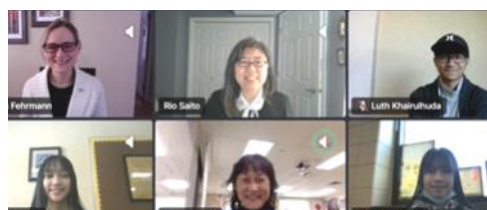
JASM February Events



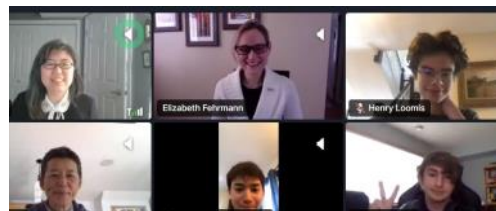
Eastview High School Level 3 2nd place winning team



Eastview High School Level 4 2nd place winning team



Shakopee High School Level 2 2nd place winning team



Memorial High School Level 3 3rd place winning team



Eastview High School Level 4 3rd place winning team



Eastview High School Level 2 3rd place winning team



Whiskey Tasting with Chris Uhde



Upper Midwest High School Japanese Language
and Culture Competition

Digital J-Quiz 2021

J | A | S | M
JAPAN AMERICA SOCIETY
of MINNESOTA

Japan America Society of Minnesota
February 20, 2021