

JAPANESE AMERICAN COMMUNITY PICNIC

AUGUST 13, 2023

-Virginia Kita

The annual picnic for the Japanese American Association of Indiana (JAAI) was held Sunday, August 13th. Around 40 attendees gathered under the Japanese Pavilion at Swinney Park West to share in community with one another. Both children and adults enjoyed a variety of foods and games popular at summer festivals throughout Japan. Event-goers were fortunate to have perfect weather for a summer picnic, with sun and a comfortable breeze.

Participants and event sponsors filled two tables with a variety of Japanese summer foods, which were served potluck style. *Yaki soba*, a cooked noodle dish and festival favorite, was prepared on site and served hot. Special thanks to SEAVAC and Mr. Imoto for providing the yakisoba! A Festival favorite such as *kakigori*, a shaved ice dessert with fruit flavored syrup, was in high demand.



Games included *suikawari*, which involves various participants taking turns smashing a watermelon with a long wooden staff while blindfolded. Watermelons were placed on a large, clean tarp on the ground,

and children lined up to take turns trying to split them open. Spectators shouted 'to the left/right' and so on, to help the blindfolded person make contact with the watermelon. True to Japanese culture, the split open fruit was not wasted - rather, it became the final refreshing part of the meal.





Yo-yo water balloon play, miniature golf putting, and even croquet was offered as additional entertainment. Thank you to Takako Imoto who set up and supervised the yo-yo game. The game with the most widespread attendee participation was bingo, and the volunteer caller (Aaron Clark) enthusiastically shouted out numbers in both Japanese and English. An assortment of prizes was offered to the various winners.

*Putting winner: 1st Chiharu Amemiya
& 2nd Brian Scherschel*



Opening remarks were made by JAAI leadership from 1:00pm, and the event concluded around 5:00pm. Closing remarks were made by Michele Yamanaka, the JAAI President-elect, who acknowledged all sponsors and organization members that helped make this event a success. The JAAI picnic ended with a short group clean-up session and many smiles.

-by Virginia Kita



Asano family enjoying Bingo and watermelon



Some of the delicious foods that were shared - 1



More of the delicious food -1



The wonder of catching a yoyo ball -1

Photos identified by "-1" were taken by the Imotos; all others by Michele Yamanaka