

OFFICE OF THE CITY REPRESENTATIVE
CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

Melanie Johnson,
City Representative

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: March 19, 2010

PRESS CONTACTS:

Randy Giancaterino,
Randy.giancaterino@phila.gov
Lauren Drinker,
ldrinker@steegethompson.com

CITY OFFICIALS ANNOUNCE PLANS FOR THE 13TH ANNUAL SUBARU CHERRY BLOSSOM FESTIVAL

Dance performances, martial arts demonstrations, sushi and sake tastings were among events designed to celebrate Japanese culture and the arrival of spring in Philadelphia.

PHILADELPHIA (March 19, 2010) – It was a taste of Japan in Philadelphia today, as Mayor Michael Nutter, joined by City Representative **Melanie Johnson**, announced the remaining events planned for a time-honored springtime celebration, the ongoing **13th Annual Subaru Cherry Blossom Festival of Greater Philadelphia**, now through April 17, 2010.

The *sakura* or cherry blossom festival opened officially earlier this month and continues through Saturday, April 17, and is a citywide celebration to welcome the arrival of spring and honor Japanese culture and traditions through music, art, entertainment food and fun. To extend a 10-year tree planting program, the Japan America Society of Greater Philadelphia donated more cherry trees to be planted in Fairmont Park. Originally presented as goodwill gifts from Japan to the United States, more than 1,000 cherry trees have been planted throughout Philadelphia parks.

“The Subaru Cherry Blossom Festival is a time to welcome the start of spring and to celebrate our City’s partnership with the Japanese community,” said **Mayor Michael A. Nutter**. “We are grateful to the Japan America Society of Greater of Philadelphia for taking part in our City’s commitment to sustainability by providing the beautiful gift of cherry trees for our parks and neighborhoods.”

To celebrate the success of the festival, Mayor Nutter presented a Subaru Cherry Blossom Festival proclamation from the City of Philadelphia and participated in a sushi-making lesson by top chef **Madame Saito**, “Philadelphia’s Queen of Sushi.” The Mayor also lead the *Kagami Biraki*, or sake barrel-breaking ceremony. Dating back three centuries, this ancient Japanese ritual signifies a new beginning.

Mark Focht, Executive Director of Fairmount Park, **Heather Ward**, Manager of Corporate Communications of Subaru of America, Inc., and Japan America Society of Greater Philadelphia Executive Director **Kazumi Teune** also participated in the program held at the Hibiscus Garden in the Horticulture Center in Fairmount Park. Swarthmore Taiko Drummers **Kim Arrow**, **Myles Dakan** and **Joe Small** and acclaimed singer-musician **Fumiyo Batta**, Music Director of Il Maggio of Japanese Association of Greater Philadelphia, performed traditional Japanese music at the event. The public is invited to

embrace the advent of spring through the 2010 Subaru Cherry Blossom Festival featuring Sakura Sunday, the Cherry Blossom Festival Gala presented by Continental Airlines and Sake Fest 2010. Explore Japanese culture, cuisine, art and entertainment, while enjoying the blooming beauty and wonder of Philadelphia's magnificent cherry blossom trees.

"The Subaru Cherry Blossom Festival is a celebration of culture, entertainment and the environment," said Johnson, the festival's Co-Chair. "With more than 50 events over six weeks, this year marks the largest Cherry Blossom Festival in the event's 13-year history. Philadelphia residents and visitors can expect traditional Japanese performances, storytelling, cuisine and many other exciting events throughout March and April."

The festival's centerpiece is Sakura Sunday held at the Horticulture Center, Montgomery Drive and Belmont Avenue, in Fairmount Park (from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.) on April 11. With new components and old favorites, Sakura Sunday promises to have something for the whole family. Tamagawa Taiko Drum and Dance will make a triumphant return to Philadelphia with a mix of thundering rhythms, colorful costumes and elegant dances. Joining them are Japanese pop punk band, UZUHI, and local group, Greg Davis & Friends.

Other new elements at Sakura Sunday will be the Cherry Blossom 5K, the Prettiest Pet in Pink Contest, a tree-planting clinic and the Subaru Sushi Experience. To complement these features will be the annual Sakura Sunday standbys – martial arts demonstrations, origami and calligraphy workshops, shiatsu massage, foods, sights and sounds with the flavor of Japan's rich cultural heritage.

For more information about the Subaru Cherry Blossom Festival of Greater Philadelphia's events, cherry blossom traditions and the Japan America Society of Greater Philadelphia, call 215-790-3810, or visit www.phillycherryblossom.org.

About the Subaru Cherry Blossom Festival

The Subaru Cherry Blossom Festival of Greater Philadelphia, a program of the Japan America Society of Greater Philadelphia (JASGP) in cooperation with the City of Philadelphia's Office of the City Representative, is an initiative to encourage a better understanding of the cultural, social and educational customs of Japan and the United States. The Festival, co-chaired by City Representative Melanie Johnson and Adelaide Ferguson, also seeks to beautify the Philadelphia landscape by annually planting and maintaining cherry trees in Fairmount Park as a gift to the City.

About the Japan America Society of Greater Philadelphia

Founded in 1994, the Japan America Society of Greater Philadelphia is an association of individuals, corporations and organizations devoted to fostering relationships between Americans and Japanese by promoting and encouraging better understanding of the business, cultural, social, educational, and political practices and customs of Japan and the U.S.

About the Office of the City Representative

Established in 1951, the mission of the Office of the City Representative is to perform ceremonial functions on behalf of the Mayor, and to promote a positive image of Philadelphia. The office develops and promotes special events designed to attract businesses, visitors and residents.

###