

## JA Living Legacy Tells the Real Stories of the Community

Japanese American Living Legacy (JALiving Legacy) was started in 2005 with a chance encounter with Charter President of the Japanese American Korean War Veterans, Robert Wada in Fullerton, Calif. After that meeting two graduate students in oral history, Natalia Yamashiro and Susan Uyemura, under the direction of Dr. Art Hansen, began a journey which would lead in them to discover their own heritage, history and start a desire to learn more about the Japanese American Community.

It started with interviewing Japanese American veterans from the Korean War but quickly developed into interviewing Japanese Americans from all aspects of military. Soon relationships with Americans of Japanese Ancestry, World War II Memorial Alliance, Japanese American Museum, San Jose, National Japanese American Veterans Council and other organizations were formed. Their services were in demand and it didn't stop with military service. The interviews led to agriculture and community leaders. Finally it was determined that JALiving Legacy needed to formalize and become more organized.

In June 2006, JALiving Legacy became a California 501c3 non profit organization. All of the staff of JALiving Legacy is 100 percent volunteers. Interviews are conducted after work, on the weekends or over the telephone.

"When we formed JALiving Legacy we made a pact to never profit off of someone's story," described CEO Susan Uyemura. "We never charge anyone to participate in our program and we make our interviews available (with permission from the participant)



Courtesy of Japanese American Living Legacy

**Japanese American Living Legacy staff members, from left: Natalia Yamashiro, president; Kirk Yamamoto, COO; Ray Uyemura, technology; and Susan Uyemura, CEO.**

to any researcher, educational institution or family member, FREE OF CHARGE."

All travel, supplies and equipment is paid for out of their own pockets. "I am fortunate to have found a group of individuals who feel the same way I do. Without their financial support, volunteer dedication and desire to help capture our history, JALiving Legacy would've shut down a long time ago," said Uyemura.

"It is not realistic to think that we can continue forever without some type of funding so that will be one of main focuses in 2007," COO Kirk Yamamoto said. "Currently, we are unable to post the oral histories on the web site due to technical/legal issues but I am confident we will solve this puzzle."

The idea behind JALiving Legacy is to make oral histories public for educational and research purposes.

JALiving Legacy is based out of Cal State, Fullerton. "We work very closely with the Center for Oral and Public History to ensure these oral histories will be preserved for future generations as well as educational purposes," Natalia Yamashiro said.

JALiving Legacy can be reached at [nyamashiro@jalivinglegacy.org](mailto:nyamashiro@jalivinglegacy.org) or (714) 278-4483. Visit the web site [www.jalivinglegacy.org](http://www.jalivinglegacy.org).