

**CONSULATE-GENERAL OF JAPAN**

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Conferral of the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold Rays with Rosette upon Mrs. Naoko Shirane, Senior Advisor to the State of Texas

On April 29 (Japan Time), the Government of Japan announced the recipients of the 2013 Spring Imperial Decorations. Among the recipients is Mrs. Naoko Shirane, Senior Advisor to the State of Texas, who will receive the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold Rays with Rosette, in recognition of her contribution to promoting friendly relations and mutual understanding between Japan and the United States.

- DECORATION: Order of the Rising Sun, Gold Rays with Rosette
- SERVICE: Contributed to promoting friendly relations and mutual understanding between Japan and the United States
- NAME: Naoko (Mitsui) Shirane
- MAJOR TITLES:
 - ◆ Founding Member, Up with People
 - ◆ Board Member, Up with People, 1965-2009
 - ◆ Representative of the City of San Antonio
 - ◆ Senior Advisor to the State of Texas
 - ◆ Senior Representative of the Texas-Japan Office
- ADDRESS (NATIONALITY): Tokyo (Japan)

Mrs. Naoko Shirane made it her life's work to build strong international relationships between people. In 1964, she and her husband, Seiichi, became founding members of Up with People, an education organization dedicated to bridging cultural barriers through community service and music. The Shiranes were instrumental in establishing the program in Japan by building bridges with Japanese community leaders, finding Japanese program staff, setting up community services, arranging performance locations, and locating host families for the UWP young adults. Mrs. Shirane and her husband also frequently traveled to Washington D.C. to garner support among politicians and businesses for the UWP program and to promote their view of global citizenship.

In 1985, Mr. and Mrs. Shirane initiated a collaboration with San Antonio Mayor Henry Cisneros to bring San Antonio a long-term relationship with Japan after the mayor led a San Antonio and Austin delegation to Tokyo. The Shiranes were instrumental in securing Kumamoto City as a Sister City for San Antonio, and were then retained as San Antonio's representatives in Japan. Since then, the two cities have enjoyed a model sister-city relationship, which has resulted in the establishment of a Toyota production plant in San Antonio, annual San Antonio delegations being sent to Japan, and a gift of a Japanese Garden from Kumamoto to San Antonio's Botanical Center.

Mrs. Shirane also served as a senior advisor to the State of Texas, based in Tokyo, and cultivated many business and cultural relationships across the state. She was responsible for securing corporate sponsorship of the 1996 Sun & Star Festival, a 100-day long, large-scale Japanese cultural event held in the Dallas/Fort Worth metroplex. As Representative of San Antonio and as Senior Advisor to Texas, Naoko Shirane has supported the advance of numerous Japanese projects and events in Texas. She was awarded with the Japanese Foreign Minister's Commendation in 2000 for her service to building international relationships, the International Person of the Year Award in San Antonio in 2006, the

Japan-America Society of Houston 40th Anniversary Award in 2008, and the Japan-America Society of Dallas/Fort Worth's Bridges to Friendship Award in 2009. In 2010, the city of San Antonio proclaimed November 14th as Naoko Shirane Day. She has been given honorary citizenship by the cities of San Antonio, Austin, Dallas, and the state of Texas. She was made Honorary Mayor of San Antonio in 2003.

For more information or if you plan to cover this event, please contact Lisa Kostelecky at 713-652-2977 x2107

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