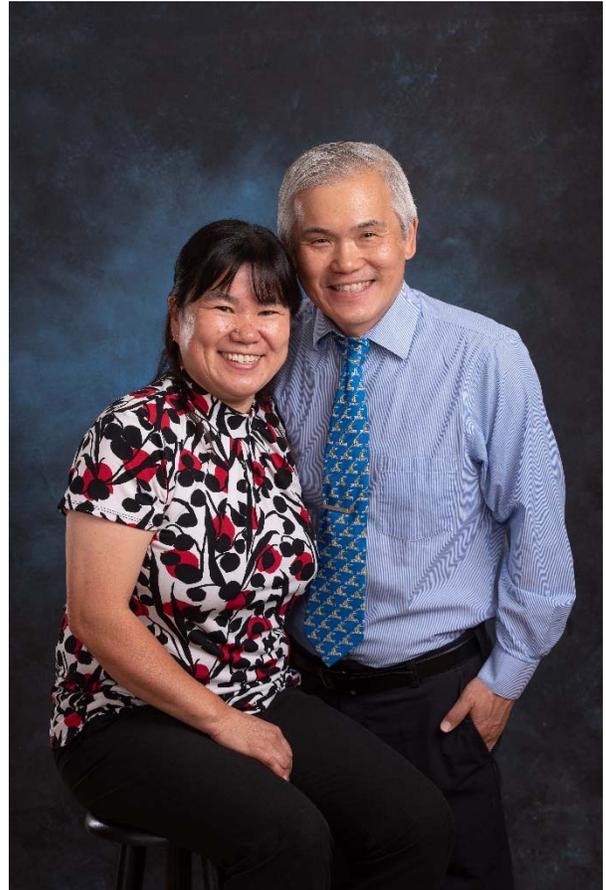


AKIMOTO & TOMOKO ICHINOMIYA RECEIVES 20TH ANNUAL BUTLER HUMAN RIGHTS AWARD

The City of Brookings will honor Akimoto and Tomoko Ichinomiya as the recipients of the 20th annual Dorothy and Eugene T. Butler Human Rights Award on Thursday, September 26. The Ichinomiyas are being recognized for effectively advancing the cause of human rights by helping people from all around the world adapt to life in Brookings and by educating people in this region about Japanese culture. Their astounding ability to bring together people from diverse cultures is a role model for American citizens in Brookings and across the nation.

The Butler Human Rights Award presentation will be held in conjunction with the ABLE awards for Accessibility, the Mayor's Sustainability Awards, the Mayor's Awards for Historic Preservation and the Mayor's Generational Leadership Awards at McCrory Gardens Visitor Center on Thursday, September 26 from 5 to 7 pm, with the presentations beginning at 6 pm. Hors d'oeuvres and refreshments will be served.



The Ichinomiyas community service to friends and organizations has been voluntary and unpaid. For years, Tomoko's status as a student wife prohibited her from paid employment but she handled her volunteer activities with the zeal of a professional. The Ichinomiyas stated goal is to contribute to the community that embraced them to achieve their aspirations for higher education and enabled them to build bridges between cultures. Here is a listing of some of their wide range of volunteer activities:

- Volunteer and leaders in services provided to international students by U.S. Friends, including a week-long orientation program each semester
- Weekly English language classes and socialization for international wives and their children
- Acquiring, organizing and dispersing the large collection of household goods and warm clothing for free distribution to international students
- Organizers and presenters in the annual Festival of Cultures held on SDSU for many years

- Encourage interfaith interaction and understanding
- Unselfish, intensive, daily care giving for American friends with debilitating, challenging, long-term health issues
- Educate Americans to admire the unique culture of their native land Japan

Aki and Tomoko met in Sioux Falls in 1990 when they individually enrolled in an English as a Second Language program offered by Augustana College. Upon completion of that program, each matriculated at SDSU when they both earned bachelor's degrees. They married upon graduation in 1996 and returned to Japan in 2001. They returned to Brookings in 2005 so Aki could pursue a master's degree in dairy science. He was hired by the department upon the degree completion and now serves as Assistant Dairy Plant Manager. Aki has been recognized regionally for his cheese and ice cream making abilities. Tomoko is currently working for Aramark at SDSU. Both have a green card which can lead to American citizenship.

"There is no way to estimate the number of people whose lives they have affected, but the list is long," stated Harriet Swedlund, former executive director of the South Dakota World Affairs Council. "They light up the room with energy, enthusiasm and optimism," she stated. Aki and Tomoko's examples for building relationships influence everyone they meet and are their way to make Brookings the friendly, comfortable, supportive environment they liked as students that lured them back to be full time residents.

Dr. Philip Baker, a previous Butler award winner added "The Ichinomiyas serve as ambassadors for Japan and to the United States with honor, compassion and love. The Butlers would be smiling with approval of this interactive and deserving couple being selected to receive the Butler Human Rights Award."

Tomoko is a master gardener who volunteers at any garden and Aki plays percussion in the Brookings Area Community Band.

The Dorothy and Eugene T. Butler Human Rights Award is named after the Butlers in recognition of their lifelong advocacy in human rights issues on the local, regional, national and international levels. The annual award recognizes significant volunteer efforts on behalf of human rights. Previous honorees, in addition to Dorothy and Eugene T. Butler, Jr. are: Dr. Philip and Winnie Baker, First United Methodist Church, the Rev. Carl Kline, the Rev. Scott Miller and Lisa Wolff, Margaret Denton, Dr. Steve Marquardt, Lawrence Novotny, Dr. Charles Woodard, Dr. Geoffrey Grant, Dr. Timothy Nichols, Scott Nagy, Dr. Ann Marie Bahr, Phyllis Cole-Dai, Harriet Swedlund, Drs. MaryJo and Richard Lee, Dr. Ruth Harper, Professor Doris Giago, and Dr. Allen Branum.