

April 29, 2012

**Japan honors Dr. Masako Wakabayashi**  
**Former President of the Japan Club of New Orleans**

On April 29, the Government of Japan officially announced that **Dr. Masako Wakabayashi**, the former President of the Japan Club of New Orleans, will be honored with a prestigious decoration, **the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold and Silver Rays**, in recognition of her outstanding contributions to promoting friendly relations between Japan and the United States. The decoration will be conferred by **His Majesty the Emperor of Japan**.

The Order of the Rising Sun was established in 1875 as the first national decoration awarded by the Japanese Government. The decoration is bestowed upon individuals who have made significant contributions to positive relations between Japan and her friends and allied nations. Dr. Wakabayashi has been recognized primarily for her abiding dedication to cultural exchanges between the Japanese and American communities in Louisiana and for her longstanding commitment to the health of Japanese residents in New Orleans.

Dr. Wakabayashi has been an active member of the Japan Club of New Orleans, a social and recreational club for Japanese citizens, American-Japanese and their families, since its inception in 1975. During her time as President of the club (1994-2000), she led the tremendous growth of **Japan Fest**, a popular annual festival of Japanese culture designed to promote understanding between Japanese and Americans. New Orleans Japan Fest remains the largest of its kind in the Gulf South.

In addition to promoting social and cultural exchanges among communities in the Greater New Orleans area, Dr. Wakabayashi has generously provided care and support to Japanese residents and visitors in need of medical attention as one of the few Japanese doctors in the region. Since moving to the United States in 1969, Dr. Wakabayashi has worked in various hospitals in New Orleans as a radiologist.

Dr. Wakabayashi's lifetime of service has been widely recognized. She was awarded **the Frank Hara Community Award** by the Asian/Pacific American Society in 1995.

The Government of Japan plans to host a formal conferment ceremony at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan in Tokyo. Dr. Wakabayashi will be granted an audience with His Majesty the Emperor of Japan on June 6.

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