

Summer festivals offer insight on Japanese heritage and more

By Randall Ishida

SACRAMENTO — As we move into the summer months we will have the opportunity to experience many Japanese-American festivals, holidays and celebrations such as Obon festivals, Buddhist bazaars, and Nisei-Week. Every festival or event has significant cultural and historical memories and meaning that are important to participants, who create new memories with each celebration.

Because the events have been celebrated for many years, preparation, planning, and attendance at them are celebrated by family members and friends often spanning more than four generations (Isei, Nisei, Sansei and Yonsei).

The festivals focus on not only shared values, but also on Japanese heritage. They provide an opportunity for people of all cultures to come together and experience Japanese culture, and become educated on this rich heritage.

These experiences are not limited to just Japanese events since every culture has their own values and beliefs. Ethnic festivals and events offer a way to experience and understand each group's differences and similarities and to gain insight and understanding of them. They are a way of enhancing our knowledge of ourselves and that of others.

Be bold and curious. You can already smell the chicken teriyaki, visualize and gloat over the various selections of sushi, and hear the koto music in the background. If you don't go you will never know. Check out an Obon odori, you have the whole summer, enjoy.