

2026 EVENTS

February 2 – March 1



Citizen Trip to Tlaquepaque & Monarch migration

March – April

Isesaki Student Art Exhibit
Botanical Center Atrium

March 28

Sushi & Sake in the Garden
6–8 PM | Mizumoto Japanese Stroll Garden

April 1

Mizumoto Japanese Stroll Garden Opens
10 AM–7 PM; Daily

April 11

Cherry Blossom Kite & Piñata Festival
11 AM–5 PM | Botanical Center Great Lawn

May 3, 10, 17, 31

Gigs in the Garden
2 PM | Peace Through People Pavilion

May 17

Annual Member Celebration
11:30 AM–1:30 PM | Peace Through People Pavilion

June 17 – July 1

Isesaki Student Ambassador Trip
Led by SPS teacher Kazumi Holcomb
eftours.com/tour-website/2815539MU

September 11 – 13

30th annual Japanese Fall Festival
Mizumoto Japanese Stroll Garden

September TBD

Citizens Trip to Isesaki

October 4, 11, 18 & 25

Gigs in the Garden
2 PM | Peace Through People Pavilion

October 16

Taste/Celebration of Tlaquepaque

October 29 – November 4

Día de los Muertos Citizen Trip to Tlaquepaque

October 31

Mizumoto Japanese Stroll Garden closes

November – December

Gardens Aglow
Mizumoto Japanese Stroll Garden

CONNECT WITH US

Celebrating 40 years of sister-city friendship in 2026, Isesaki, Japan, is about 60 miles north of Tokyo with a population of about 200,000. Dating from 535 AD, modern Isesaki is a diverse university and manufacturing city, known for both its ancient clothmaking and a major online retailer of anime and manga goods.

The relationship with Tlaquepaque began in 2003. This city of about 500,000, in the heart of Mexico's tequila-producing state of Jalisco, hosts the annual National Ceramic Prize and the ENART exhibition, which speak to its reputation for ceramic artistry; in fact, its name translates to "place above clay land."

Learn more about participating with SSCA to advance its mission to:

- Encourage peace through understanding
- Welcome and embrace unity within diversity
- Facilitate cultural, economic, technological and information exchanges
- Transform distant locations into person-to-person relationships

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PARTNERS

The SSCA is proud to have partnership agreements with the following organizations:

City of Springfield
Friends of the Garden
Missouri State University
Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce
Springfield-Greene County Park Board
Springfield Botanical Center
Springfield Public Schools
Springfield Regional Arts Council



SPRINGFIELD
**SISTER
CITIES**

Peace Through People

2026

Celebrate Peace through People



Annual Calendar • Year in Review

GET INVOLVED

Join

It all starts with members! With annual plans to fit your needs - \$30 for individuals to \$100 for families of six - the benefits easily repay the cost. That includes free admission to the Mizumoto Japanese Stroll Garden, the Japanese Fall Festival and Gardens Aglow along with food/drink vouchers and discounts at the annual Member Celebration and Gigs in the Garden. peacethroughpeople.org/membership

Volunteer

SSCA relies on volunteers to produce events and serve on committees. Volunteers contributed more than 1,530 hours to support SSCA in 2025 in fun and rewarding volunteer roles that advance our mission of cultural understanding. peacethroughpeople.org/volunteer

Host

You don't have to know Spanish or Japanese to host sister-city guests for homestays or day visits; Ozarks hospitality speaks its own language, and hosting brings its own rewards. peacethroughpeople.org/host

Travel

Visiting Japan and Mexico with SSCA promises curated experiences to both famous landmarks and off-the-beaten-path visits. See a forest of monarch butterflies in Mexico or march in a parade steeped in centuries of Japanese history. All fortified by great food, local shopping and new forever friends. peacethroughpeople.org/travel

Give

Generous sponsorships from individuals and companies help SSCA offer free or low-cost community events and host visiting delegates. Donations can support travel scholarships, the music-ambassador program and general operations of a small team with big goals for international connection. SSCA is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization. peacethroughpeople.org/sponsorship



Visit our events page for details.

Sign up for our monthly e-letter.



2025 IN REVIEW

Tlaquepaque Travel:

A February **citizen delegation of 12** toured Tlaquepaque ceramics workshops, enjoyed a concert, met with city leaders, sampled authentic Jalisco tequila, and participated in a Chinese New Year celebration in Mexico.

Isesaki-Springfield School Exchanges:

The annual student art exchange displayed **157 pieces** from Isesaki students at the Springfield Botanical Center. Springfield Public Schools middle-schoolers sent **153 letters** to Uehasu Junior High to start a penpal program.

Sushi & Sake:

This sell-out debut **hosted about 160 guests** sampling sushi and four sake varieties, with music by former Isesaki ambassadors Dallas Jones and Molly Healey during a late-March sunset before the April 1 garden opening.

Cherry Blossom Kite & Piñata Festival:

About **2,000 attended** this free April 5 festival. **Backed by a \$15,000 Missouri Humanities grant**, it celebrated Japanese and Mexican spring traditions with music, crafts, piñatas, and giant kites by pro kite flyer Michael Sherman.

Gigs in the Garden:

Six performances drew **nearly 1,400 fans** on May and October Sundays at the Pavilion and Botanical Center. Celebrating 10 years, the series **raised \$1,450 for accessibility projects** at Nathanael Greene/Close Memorial Park.

Isesaki and Japan:

Led by 2025 music ambassador Joe Dillstrom, a **10-member delegation** traveled by bullet train to Tokyo Skytree, Kyoto, and Hiroshima Peace Memorial before homestays in Isesaki and carrying the Mikoshi shrine during the city festival.

Japanese Fall Festival:

In September, taiko drummers, kyūdō students, and chindon performers joined Samurai Sword Soul, calligrapher Sieran Chiba, Isesaki's delegation, and vendors. **Admissions exceeded 22,000. SSCA contributed \$64,581.33** to the Park Board for Stroll Garden projects. In 2025, those included the new exit gate and Zig-Zag Bridge and Wisteria Island arbor rebuilds.

Taste of Tlaquepaque:

Tierra Mojada reunited with Springfield's M-Dock Band for a final October performance before M-Dock's retirement. **About 200 attendees experienced Tlaquepaque** through music, spirits, an artwork auction, school performances, and hosted visits.

