



**“Sunpu Gate”**  
**2006 Sister Cities International Award Winner**  
**“Arts and Culture – Innovation”**  
**Omaha (Nebraska) Sister Cities Association**

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Purpose: To mark a 40 year enduring friendship, a 1/3 replica of the circa 1600 Shizuoka Sunpu Gate was built at the Omaha Lauritzen Botanical Gardens, with a mini-Mt Fuji behind it.

What does it take to build a Gate?

Shizuoka, Japan Core Group: Yuichi Kawai: “Omaha Club” founder in Shizuoka and prominent businessman, Toshi Kawai: On-Site Director, Shuichiro Kohama: Project Director, Takashi Watanabe: Roof Tile Owner, Daisuke Watanabe: Roof Tile Project Manager, Nobuo Takeshita: Chief Carpenter, Quince Versavel: Project Coordinator, Tomoo Takagi: Chief Gardner, Yoichiro Suzuki: contributor of 22 stone lanterns, Shimozawa family: donation of lumber from their 350 year old tree.

Over 150 Japanese citizens participated in the Omaha project and ceremonies.

Mayor Zenkichi Kojima of Shizuoka and government officials.

Shizuoka businessmen, Kimono school, Koto players, Kiyari Chanters, Shinto Priests and assistants, Taiko drummer.

Omaha, Nebraska Core Group: Spencer Crews: Executive Director of Lauritzen Gardens, Larry Uebner: 2005 Chairman of OSCA, Sue Mehaffey: OSCA Secretary, Sue Leuschen: OSCA Board, Mel Bohn: OSCA Board, Steve Adams: UNO Photographer, Chizuko Takechi: Japanese-Omaha Community/Interpreter.

Hundreds of local Omaha citizens supported the project by donations and/or in-kind offerings.

Mayor Mike Fahey of Omaha.

Ronald Roskens, Honorary Council General of Japan in Omaha.

Richard Takechi and Marc Kraft: former Omaha City Councilmen.

Major corporate sponsors included Blue Cross/Blue Shield, Peter Kiewit, and Mutual of Omaha.

Each of the other Omaha sister cities participated at the gala finale dinner.

Interpreters and translators came from the local Japanese-American citizens in Omaha.

University of Nebraska at Omaha students produced a video accounting of the entire project.

Construction team included the Carpenters Local 444 and numerous volunteers from the Omaha Sister Cities Association general membership and board members, Lauritzen Gardens grounds crew, staff and administration, Boy Scouts, Venture Crew Scouts, and private contractors.

Others included: Ikebana Society of Omaha, Taiko drummers from Lincoln, Nebraska.

“Not only did the gate get built in record time, but, friendships and relationships were built that will be everlasting. The heart and soul of workers and volunteers went into this project. Pride in craftsmanship will be felt for generations. Omaha and Shizuoka can be proud of this beautiful addition to the Lauritzen Gardens.” Larry Uebner, 2005 Chairman of the Omaha Sister Cities Association.