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On Thursday, January 30<sup>th</sup>, The Consulate-General of Japan in Houston held a reception in honor of Ms. Donna Cole, who was awarded the Ministry of Foreign Affairs award on Wednesday, July 31, 2013. Ms. Cole was among the 79 individual foreign recipients who were awarded this prestigious honor by the Government of Japan. Ms. Cole was presented with this award in recognition of her esteemed service in the promotion of the mutual understanding between Japan and the United States of America.

At the reception, Ms. Cole spoke of her experience as a Japanese-American, never feeling fully at home in either the United States and during her visits to Japan. She discussed how her foreign nature set her apart in either country. Emboldened by this sense of displacement, Ms. Cole declares she has since devoted her time to strengthening the U.S Japan relations in Houston, so she and others might bring understanding, business, and culture to both countries. She lauded the United States' and Japan's excellent cultural and economic exchange, and the political friendship that exists between the two countries she holds with great pride and esteem.

Donna Fujimoto Cole is a 3rd generation Japanese American, born in Colorado and raised in the Rio Grande Valley of Texas. She is a former President of the Japan-America Society of Houston and Current President and CEO of Cole Chemical, Inc.

Ms. Cole is also a well-known entrepreneur in the Houston community, particularly with regards to US-Japan cultural exchanges. She has engaged the community in many Japan-related events through her excellent abilities and an extensive network. She was the president of Japan America Society Houston (JASH) in 2008 and remains active with the organization even after her tenure. Her many memberships have allowed her to participate in big projects such as the repair of the Japan Garden in Hermann Park, and the opening of the Japan Gallery in the Houston Museum. She also worked to implement the construction of the Asia Society Texas Center, as well as many other critical projects. Her active participation stands as a testament to her leadership skills and Ms. Cole's devotion to promoting the friendship between the US and Japan.

Ms. Cole works to spread this important cultural exchange to people of all ages. In order to promote a Japanese-U.S understanding with the youth, Ms. Cole has supported junior high school exchange between Houston and its sister city in Chiba, Japan last year. She also took a leading role during the Houston's delegation's visit to Chiba in order celebrate the 40th

anniversary of Chiba-Houston sister-city relationship.

With the National Veterans Network, she is responsible for bringing together a broad network of Japanese Americans to honor members of the 100<sup>th</sup>/442<sup>nd</sup> regiment in World War II. Through her efforts, the Japan-American members of the U.S military during World War II were honored with the Congressional Gold Medal, the highest military honor, which travelled to seven cities across the country before it was recently brought to the Smithsonian Museum in Washington D.C.