

Debra Nakatomi

A compassionate leader who has dedicated her life to advancing gender equity and female leadership.

“

I passionately believe there is no more effective global movement to prepare girls and young women to reach their full potential than Girl Guides and Girl Scouts.

”



Debra Nakatomi is a lifelong Girl Scout and advocate for gender equity who has demonstrated her commitment to promoting women and girls' leadership throughout her professional career and personal life. She has led organizations through strategic change, growth, and capacity development, ultimately helping them build resilience, elevate their stories, and build a better future. Debra has brought her professional expertise to advise and support non-profit/NGO organizations in the United States and Japan, including the Los Angeles Women's Foundation, GOLD (Global Organization for Leadership and Diversity), and Girl Scouts of the USA.

As a GSUSA Board Member for 12 years, Debra focused on giving back to the movement that first developed her leadership skills - paying it forward to the rising generation of girls. She served as Board Secretary for three years and International Commissioner and Chair of the GSUSA WAGGGS Task Force for six years. As International Commissioner, Debra helped to increase capacity and resources for GSUSA's crucial global engagement work.

Debra also partnered with WAGGGS on several initiatives, including co-chairing a roundtable on single gender experiences, serving as a member of the diversity working group, and representing the organization at the International Association for Volunteer Effort. Debra's work in these roles alongside girls and members gave her a deep understanding of WAGGGS and our global movement.

As a fierce advocate for women and girls, Debra has earned global honors and recognition for her impact. She has also spoken at numerous international conferences and events on leadership, diversity and equity, and communications.



Debra is well positioned to accelerate progress and will use her skills and experience to advance the organization's mission. A thoughtful consensus builder, she leads with empathy, inclusion, and integrity. Debra believes that there is no more critical time than now for WAGGGS to empower girls and young women to speak out and lead change.

Biographical Highlights

Girl Scouts/WAGGGS Experience

International Commissioner and Chair of GSUSA WAGGGS Task Force (2005-2011)

GSUSA National Board Secretary (2011-2014)

GSUSA National Board Member (2002-2014)

WAGGGS World Conference Delegate (2011, 2014)

WAGGGS Western Hemisphere Delegate (2010, 2013)

WAGGGS Diversity Committee (2009)

WAGGGS and GSUSA Global Roundtable Chair (2007)

Selected Professional Experience

Nakatomi & Associates (1989-present)

Founder and President of strategic communications and change management firm.

Bridge Media (2011-present)

Documentary Film Producer: “Stories From Tohoku” (2011), “Norman Mineta and His Legacy: An American Story” (2019).

Selected Volunteer Experience

Irene Hirano Inouye Philanthropic Leadership Fund (2018-present)

Advance research and programs at a fund that explores re-envisioning foundation leadership as it solves society’s most pressing problems.

Peace Over Violence (2016-present)

As an Advisory Council member, supported organizational work to build healthy relationships and keep families and communities free from sexual, domestic and interpersonal violence. This included supporting the organization to launch a global sexual assault awareness campaign.

California Wellness Foundation (2015-present)

As Trustee, Board Chair (2016-2018), Investment Committee member (2019-2020), and current Governance Committee member, guide strategy and governance for health and wellness nonprofit with the mission to increase access to health care, quality education, good jobs, healthy environment, and safe neighborhoods. The Foundation is committed to confronting gender inequity and meeting the needs of women leaders, fueling innovation and advocacy and inspiring other philanthropic peers to join.

GOLD (Global Organization for Leadership and Diversity) (2011-2016)

As a volunteer, helped develop programs, events and fostered opportunities to promote women’s global leadership across the Pacific.

Los Angeles Women’s Foundation (1988-1994)

As Board Chair and Trustee, launched and governed an organization focused on raising philanthropic funds for women and girls, ultimately guiding its merger with a sister organization.





Selected Presentations And Honors

Order of the Rising Sun (2020)

Gold and Silver Rays. Conferment from the Japan Ministry of Foreign Affairs for individuals who have made distinguished contributions to advancing global partnerships.

Peace Over Violence (2019)

“20 Over 20” Honoree.

Center for the Pacific Asian Family (2018)

“Champion for Change” Honoree.

American Chamber of Commerce, Japan and U.S.-Japan Council (2013)

Presentation, Women in Business Summit, Tokyo, Japan.

World Volunteer Conference (IAVE) (2011)

Presentation, Singapore.

Global Organization for Leadership and Diversity (GOLD) Global Conference (2011)

Presentation, “Developing Next Generation Leadership,” Tokyo, Japan.

References/Testimonials

“Debra Nakatomi exemplifies the heart of service and the spirit of global understanding in action. Participants at many World and Regional Conferences have been drawn to her warmth, openness, and keen interest in building authentic connections and have appreciated her drive to explore areas of collaboration and growth. Debra would be a highly skilled contributor and valued colleague on the World Board.”

— Connie Matsui

“Debra Nakatomi was Girl Scouts of the USA’s International Commissioner when I was serving as Vice President of Global Girl Scouting for Girl Scouts of the USA. Debra knows WAGGGS. She understands the complex issues and challenges our MOs and World Board are currently facing. She has worked in global leadership positions professionally and as a volunteer. Debra is passionate about issues facing girls and young women globally and will work tirelessly to do the work needed as a board member to strengthen both the capacity of our MOs and our global Girl Guiding and Girl Scouting Movement. Debra’s experience, knowledge, and passion is needed. I am sure she will strengthen our World Board.”

— Sandy Thomas

