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El Camino College | Public Relations & Marketing Department
16007 Crenshaw Blvd., Torrance, CA 90506
Contact: Ann M. Garten, Director, Community Relations
Telephone: (310) 660-3406 | E-Mail: agarten@elcamino.edu

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El Camino College Celebrates 10th Annual Cherry Blossom Festival; Awards Scholarship to Nursing Student

El Camino College celebrated its 10th Annual cherry blossom festival on March 9, among a grove of cherry trees in full bloom.

Now known as the Dr. Nadine Ishitani Hata Memorial Cherry Blossom Festival, the event is named after the college's former vice president of Academic Affairs who served El Camino College for 34 years as history professor, dean, and vice president.

Hata was a fourth-generation Japanese American whose teaching and scholarship promoted awareness of issues related to Asian Americans. She was instrumental in working with American Honda Motor Corporation to bring several dozen Japanese cherry trees to El Camino College 10 years ago. The trees were donated to El Camino College by American Honda as a traditional gesture of friendship, similar to the gift given to America by Japan in 1912. Those cherry trees still bloom in Washington, D.C. Under Hata's leadership, the cherry blossom festival has become a college tradition celebrating friendship and the beginning of spring. Karin Baker, Coordinator, Corporate Community Relations of American Honda attended the event.

Nursing student Lidia Asato was awarded the 2010 Dr. Nadine Ishitani Hata Memorial Scholarship. She works in the Harbor UCLA pediatric emergency room and is pursuing a bachelor's degree from California State University, Dominguez Hills. This scholarship was created by Hata – during her battle with cancer, she was a direct recipient of the professional care provided by many El Camino College graduates who had chosen careers in healthcare. She witnessed first-hand the critical role these professionals play in the quality of modern healthcare, so it was her wish that a scholarship be established to support students working toward healthcare careers.

The celebration also included student presentations; the presentation of an influential essay published by noted author and friend of the Hata family, Aiko Herzig-Yoshinaga; and an inspiring performance by renowned koto player and composer Yukiko Matsuyama, who performed on the 13-string harp-like instrument.

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