

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
CONTACT: Andrea Rollin
BLACK SHIPS FESTIVAL
PHONE: (401) 846-2720

The 26th Annual Black Ships Festival Brings Japanese Culture to Newport

NEWPORT, RI –s *May 21, 2009* -- The Japan-America Society of Rhode Island is pleased to present the **26th Anniversary of the Annual Black Ships Festival**, July 16-19, 2009. The festival is a celebration commemorating the establishment of friendly trade relations between the U.S. and Japan that began when Newport's own Commodore Matthew C. Perry, USN, secured the Treaty of Kanagawa in 1854. This event also celebrates the 51 years of the sister city relationship with Shimoda, Japan and Newport, Rhode Island. The four-day festival features over 50 exciting events that provide the opportunity to see, sample, and experience authentic Japanese arts, foods, performances, and traditions. The following is a list of just some of the highlighted events:

* ***Festival Opening Ceremonies*** July 17th 10:30am Touro Park, Newport RI
Colorful ceremonies to commemorate Newport's native son, Commodore Matthew C. Perry, and the signing of the treaty of Kanagawa, which opened trade between Japan and United States. Wreath-laying at Commodore Perry's Statue and speeches by American and Japanese dignitaries. Navy color guard and band. Newport Artillery Co. will fire cannon salutes.

* ***Governors' Black Ships Gala*** July 17th 6:30pm Rosecliff Mansion, Bellevue Avenue. The 26th Annual Japan America Society of Rhode Island Black Ships Festival Gala will take place at Rosecliff on Bellevue Avenue on July 17th. Join us in celebrating the Sister City relationship between Newport and Shimoda. Enjoy a unique evening that fuses both Japanese and American culture. The evening begins with the breaking of the ceremonial sake drum filled with ***Gekkeikan*** Sake. Music, dancing, special performances, open bar and delectable food will make this an evening to remember. The Black Ships Festival Gala is an elegant evening with a Japanese flair celebrating 26 years of friendship.

* ***Sailing, Gekkeikan Sake, & Sushi!*** While sailing on the magnificent Tall Ship, the 101' schooner Aurora, enjoy the beautiful Newport harbor as you sip Gekkeikan sake and sample sushi on Thursday, July 16 4pm-6pm and Sunday, July 19 2pm-4pm. Tickets must be purchased ahead of time because it always sell out. \$30 per person in advance and \$35 day of the event if available

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* *Arts & Crafts Fair Demonstrations and Workshops* Saturday July 18 and Sunday July 19 Calligraphy, Origami, Ninja, Ikebana, Sushi Making, Aikido (Martial Arts), Tea Ceremony, Acupuncture, Shorin-Ryu (Okinawan Martial Arts), Shiatsu and Reiki (Japanese healing and relaxation) and more!

Taiko Drum Festival* Saturday, July 18th 5pm The Taiko Drum Festival will take place Saturday, July 18th at 5pm featuring **Odaiko New England Taiko Drummers. Doors will open at 4:30pm with a special introduction by Sumo Wrestler Manny Yarbrough and The Shishi Mai - the Lion Dance by Stephen Long. Odaiko New England (ONE) began drumming in 1994 and is fast becoming one of the premier taiko groups on the East Coast. By combining Japanese aesthetic sensibility with the bold American spirit, ONE is forging its own modern distinctive style and voice as it challenges the very definition of the art of taiko.

This festival is a demonstration of the sacred **Taiko drumming** which dates back to ancient times when the "Taiko," or Japanese drum, was first used to drive away evil spirits. During forcing the spirit of rain into action. Drumming was also used as a means of practical communication droughts in ancient Japan, farmers would play drums to imitate the sounds of thunder,. A rural village would establish its boundaries by how far villagers could hear the largest drum. Taiko has been used in battlefields, religious ceremonies, and festivals for over two thousand years in Japan. Today, Taiko uses extensive physical and mental conditioning to forge a group, which works synergistically to create the vibrant sound, and powerful rhythms that characterize the art. There will also be another performance Sunday July 19 at 11am.

Other Events include Tea Tastings, Sushi Demonstrations & Memorial Ceremonies. These are just some of the events that will be taking place during this fun-filled, four-day festival of Japanese culture, for a complete schedule visit www.blackshipsfestival.com. The festival has two missions. First, to bring an exciting and fun Japanese cultural experience to the people of Newport. Secondly, to augment and enhance the existing cultural, educational, and economic programs between Japan and the United States by celebrating the historic achievements of Commodore Perry.

The Japanese term *kurofune* means "black ships" and refers to the American ships that were excluded from Japan, with one exception, for two hundred years. However, when Commodore Perry negotiated the Treaty of Kanagawa in 1854, Japan opened trade with the west, which has exposed us to an array of Japanese imports from sushi to Nissan cars to Sony electronics. This festival will be fun for everyone!

For further information on other exciting Black Ships Festival events and a free brochure, please call (401) 846-2720 and visit us on our web site at www.BlackShipsFestival.com to purchase tickets and view the schedule.