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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**Japan's Foreign Minister's Commendation Awarded to Mrs. Toshiko Shimoura**

Mrs. Toshiko Shimoura of Southfield, Michigan has been selected as one of only ten individuals in the United States to receive the Foreign Minister's Commendation by the Government of Japan. This honor is conferred on individuals and groups, each year, for outstanding efforts and valuable contributions to mutual understanding and friendly relations with Japan.

After spending her high school years in an internment camp during World War II, Mrs. Shimoura attended Michigan State University, then transferred to the University of California where she earned a degree in Microbiology. She worked as a bi-county laboratory director before returning to Michigan and settling in Southfield. Since then she has worked toward building bridges of friendship and cultural understanding. Through volunteer activities at her children's schools, her church and in her neighborhood she committed herself to dispel stereotypes and misconceptions about Japanese and Japanese-Americans. She became an active member of the PTA, the Southfield Youth Symphony and the subdivision association board. She served on the board of the Japanese American Citizens League to help promote fairness and equality for Japanese Americans, and as its president three times.

Along the way, Mrs. Shimoura developed an interest in *ikebana* – the art of Japanese flower arranging. She studied diligently for years, eventually achieving the high level of professor in the *ikenobo* style. For nearly fifty years, through flowers, she continued to promote cross cultural understanding between Japanese and Americans by sharing her Japanese heritage. She has served as an instructor for Ikebana International Chapter 85 for many of those years – bringing together Americans and Japanese to study *ikebana* and create friendships. She has also served as its president, and president of the Ikenobo Society of Michigan.

The Foreign Minister Commendation is awarded to Mrs. Shimoura for more than six decades of devotion to significantly contributing to the promotion of friendship between Japan and the U.S.

Dr. Kazuyuki Katayama, Consul General of Japan in Detroit, will soon host an award ceremony and celebration to honor Mrs. Toshiko Shimoura.

This year, the Foreign Minister's Commendation was awarded to 88 individuals and 20 groups from outside of Japan, and 20 individuals and 10 groups in Japan. All will receive an award certificate signed by Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida and commemorative gift (silk furoshiki).

The Foreign Minister's Commendations are awarded to individuals and groups with outstanding achievements in international fields, to acknowledge their contributions to the promotion of friendship between Japan and other countries and areas.

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