



Montebello–Ashiya Sister City Association

Student Ambassador Exchange Program Application 2026

This cultural and educational exchange program is part of the “People to People” programs initiated by President Dwight D. Eisenhower during the early 1950s. As part of these historical programs, the Montebello Student Ambassador Exchange with Ashiya, Japan, established in 1964, will celebrate 62 years in 2026. The Student Ambassador experience allows Montebello students to travel to Japan, live in the homes of Ashiya families, and participate in Japanese cultural events. In exchange, Ashiya students come to live in Montebello; thus, the program serves to strengthen and promote better understanding and friendship between the United States and Japan.

The students selected for this exchange program act as Ambassadors for the City of Montebello and participate in numerous public appearances and speaking engagements in Ashiya, Japan. Many long-lasting friendships have developed among past student ambassadors and the people working together in the Montebello-Ashiya Sister City program. This “People to People” program also fosters friendship and cooperation between the residents of the two cities: Montebello and Ashiya.

The Montebello-Ashiya Sister City Association selects a minimum of 3 students from Montebello to represent the Association and Montebello City as ambassadors. ***Two are selected to travel to Ashiya, Japan, and at least one other will be selected to remain in Montebello to act as a host ambassador.***

Basic Eligibility Requirements

- Must be a full-time student between the ages of 15–18 during the exchange.
- Minimum cumulative GPA of 2.5 (unofficial transcripts accepted).
- Must reside in Montebello (90640) at time of application & when traveling to Japan.
- Demonstrate positive character, enthusiasm, friendliness, cooperation, and responsibility.
- Parent(s)/Guardian(s) must provide signatures of approval for student participation (pgs 6-7).
- Parent(s)/Guardian(s) must commit to hosting Ashiya student ambassadors in their home for **one host week for three consecutive years.**
- Student and family must become active members in the Sister City Association (\$40/year).
- Student must be in good health and able to travel internationally.
- Must possess a valid U.S. passport at time of travel.
- Parent(s)/Guardian(s) must be present at the time of applicant interviews.

For More Information

If you or your parent(s)/guardian(s) have questions, please contact: montebelloashiya@gmail.com

Application Procedures

Applications will be available on our website, masca-montebello.org, in the Montebello City Hall lobby located at 1600 West Beverly Blvd., and at all local area high schools.

Students should submit their completed application to:

*Montebello-Ashiya Sister City Association
P.O. Box 633
Montebello, California 90640*

Applications may also be emailed to: montebelloashiya@gmail.com

All applications must be received by **5:00 P.M. on Friday, February 27, 2026.**

As part of the selection process, student applicants will be required to complete both an oral interview and a written essay. Students and their parent(s)/guardian(s) will be notified of the interview date and location, scheduled for March 2026. All applicants must attend the interview with a parent or guardian. Parent(s)/guardian(s) will also participate in an interview and orientation.

Who sponsors the student ambassador program?

The Montebello-Ashiya Sister City Affiliation Association, Inc. is a non-profit, non-partisan community service organization responsible for this program. The Montebello City Council supports the program. The Association raises funds to help offset the cost of sending students to Japan.

Scholarships

In addition to travel support, the Montebello-Ashiya Sister City Association awards scholarships to encourage the continuing education of Montebello youth.

- Two \$500 scholarships are awarded in the names of **Mrs. Elaine Kirchner** and **Jay & Dorothy Nomura** to the selected travel ambassadors.
- One \$250 scholarship is awarded to the Host Ambassador.
- Participating host families are eligible for the **Mrs. Yae Aihara** grant to support their hosting responsibilities.

Program Travel Duration

The two selected Student Ambassadors will visit Ashiya, Japan, for three (3) weeks during July and August 2026. Students will live with host families and be treated as members of the household. English-speaking support will always be available. Prior to departure, ambassadors and their parent(s)/guardian(s) will attend an interview and orientation covering travel preparation, cultural norms, and program expectations.

2026 Exchange Schedule

- Montebello Ambassadors depart for Ashiya: *Saturday, July 18*
- Ashiya Ambassadors arrive in Montebello: *Sunday, July 26*
- Montebello Ambassadors return: *Sunday, August 9*
- Ashiya Ambassadors depart: *Sunday, August 16*

Responsibilities Of Student Ambassadors & Families

1. Ambassadors represent the City of Montebello and the mission of the Sister City Association. They will serve as **active representatives for three years**, participating in public appearances and speaking engagements coordinated by official program partners.
2. Students and their parent(s)/guardian(s) must become **active** Association members and agree to **host visiting ambassadors for one week for three consecutive years**. Families also agree to support the Association's mission, non-political, and non-profit status.
3. Traveling ambassadors must possess a valid U.S. passport and health/travel insurance. **The Association will provide insurance coverage for the duration of travel.** All current international health and safety protocols will be followed.
4. As part of the Montebello Ambassador scholarship, the Association provides round-trip airfare. Host families in Ashiya provide room and board. **Students are responsible for personal spending money.**
5. While in Ashiya, ambassadors will participate in cultural activities, community events, and public appearances, including public speaking.
6. Students should be prepared to experience traditional Japanese meals and customs, and should not place a hardship on their host families by making food requests. Dietary accommodations will be made for documented allergies or medical needs.
7. Ambassadors are expected to dress appropriately for official functions. Formal attire may be required for civic meetings (meeting the Mayor of Ashiya) and ceremonies.
8. Ambassadors must conduct themselves respectfully at all times as representatives of Montebello.
9. Ambassadors are encouraged to support future program recruitment and fundraising events.
10. Parent(s)/guardian(s) will be asked to assist with planning and hosting program events such as the *Welcome Reception* and *Sayonara Event*, which occur in July & August.

Responsibility Of The Host Ambassador

The Host Ambassador remains in Montebello and helps coordinate activities for visiting Ashiya students. Responsibilities include participating in civic functions, Association meetings, and cultural events such as the *Welcome Party*, *Mayor's Reception*, *Ice Cream Social*, *City Tour*, *Beach Party*, *Nisei Parade*, *Sayonara Event*, and other excursions.

Disclaimer

The Montebello-Ashiya Sister City Association Affiliation, Inc. and cooperating travel agencies act only in the capacity of agents in matters of air transportation, and their liability is limited to the terms of the flight ticket. The Cities of Montebello and Ashiya are not responsible for any delays, inconvenience, accidents, expenses, or mishaps of any kind whatsoever resulting in part or entirely from the negligence of others, or from causes beyond our control.

Important Dates

- Applications Available: February 10, 2026
- Application Deadline: Friday, February 27, 2026
(Mail, [email](#), or hand deliver to a MASCA officer)
- Interviews & Selection: Scheduled for March 7, 2026

Student Information

Full Legal Name	
Student Cell Number	
Student Email Address	
Home Address	Montebello, CA 90640
Length of Montebello Residency	
Date of Birth / Age / Sex / Gender	
Height / Favorite Color / Shoe Size	

Education & Part-Time Job Information

School Name / City	
Current GPA / Major (if applicable)	
Graduation Year / Dates Attended	
Present Part-Time Job & Location	
Full Name & Email of Supervisor	

Health & Travel Information

Do you have a valid passport? If yes, include passport number & expiration date.	
Do you experience motion sickness?	
Are you currently taking medication?	
Allergies or health concerns (N/A if none)	

Student Interests & Short Responses

Languages you can speak, read, or write:

Hobbies, interests, special talents, or abilities:

Clubs, activities, or honors:

Educational, professional, or career goals:

Why are you interested in traveling to Ashiya, Japan?

Family / Guardian Information

Parent/Guardian 1 Full Name	
Parent/Guardian 1 Occupation	
Parent/Guardian 1 Phone Number & Email	
Parent/Guardian 2 Full Name	
Parent/Guardian 2 Occupation	
Parent/Guardian 2 Phone Number & Email	
Household Members (Name / Age / Relation)	

Will your family be able to host a visiting ambassador? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If no, please explain:

Signatures

Student Signature / Date	
Parent/Guardian Signature / Date	

The signatures above indicate that all information on this application is accurate and true, and the student applicant and their parent(s)/guardian(s) have read all of the information on their responsibilities to the Montebello-Ashiya Student Ambassador Program.

The application for the Montebello-Ashiya Student Ambassador Program is considered complete only if it includes the following:

- Completed application form, clearly printed or typed, with the signatures of the student applicant and parent/guardian(s) (sign on pages 6 & 7).
- Current school transcripts with minimum 2.5 cumulative GPA (unofficial transcripts accepted).

Elaine Kirchner Scholarship and Jay & Dorothy Nomura Scholarships
for Montebello–Ashiya Student Exchange Ambassadors

- Two \$500 scholarships will be awarded—one to each selected Montebello Student Exchange Ambassador.
- One \$250 scholarship will be awarded to the Host Ambassador.

Scholarship Eligibility Requirements

To be eligible for the Elaine Kirchner Scholarship or the Jay & Dorothy Nomura Scholarship, applicants must:

- Complete the Montebello–Ashiya Sister City Association Student Ambassador Program application.
- Be between the ages of 15–18 and a current resident of Montebello.
- Be enrolled full-time in high school, trade school, or college with a minimum GPA of 2.5.
- Be selected as an official Montebello–Ashiya Student Exchange Ambassador.

Yae Aihara Montebello Host Family Award

This award is granted to participating Montebello host families in support of hosting an Ashiya Student Ambassador.

Agreement & Conditions

The student applicant and their parent(s)/guardian(s) understand that if the student is selected as an Ambassador, acceptance of the Ambassador scholarship and Host Family Award includes the following commitments:

- The family agrees to become active members of the Sister City Association.
- The family agrees to support the Association's mission, programs, and non-profit status as outlined in the application materials and Association by-laws.
- The family agrees to host Ashiya Student Ambassadors for one (1) week for three (3) consecutive years.

Failure to fulfill these responsibilities may result in forfeiture/recompensation of awarded funds/program expenses.

Signatures

Student Signature / Date	
Parent/Guardian Signature / Date	