

Rocky and Yoko Iwashima have been residents of Raleigh, North Carolina since 1987. They are very active and passionate supporters in connecting Japan and American cultures and communities, through their work with Nippon Club of the Triangle.



Rocky Iwashima was born in Tokyo in 1943, graduated Chiba-University by majoring Industrial Design in 1967. During his university life, he took an around world trip on a sail boat with an American family for 2 years, visited 41 countries, and began his ever-expanding interests in world culture. He worked with IBM-Japan for 26 years until his early retirement in 1993, including the last 6 years on assignment in Raleigh. During this assignment, he consulted retail customers around the Pacific Ocean and added another 10 countries visits. After IBM, Rocky started his own company as an independent consultant in the area of Supply Chain Management and continued his active international consulting career until 2006. Rocky published two Japanese books related to the distribution industry restructuring opportunity in 1996, and he received "Quick-Response Grand Prix" from the apparel industry in Japan in 1997.

Yoko Iwashima was born in Nagoya in 1947, graduated Japan Women's University(Nihon Joshi-Dai) in 1971. Growing up, Yoko lived in many areas in Japan, and has fond memories of using bamboo sleighs in cold winters, Mikan during in warm places, and especially Mt. Fuji and green tea. Yoko and Rocky married in 1975, and lived by the seashore near Eno-shima where they enjoyed being one of the pioneering group of wind-surfers in Japan. They celebrated their 44th anniversary this year. Yoko has enjoyed her 32 years in Raleigh, and has found friends that can enjoy the four seasons like in Japan. Yoko and Rocky live with their eldest son, Taki, and the other three boys, Tad, Mic, and Hiro, are all active in the international business world.

Their history of community service in Raleigh started with Yoko, who volunteered in high-school Japanese class as an assistant teacher for five years, and has been involved with Nippon Club activities since it was founded in 1990. Rocky increased his involvement as he retired from consulting, and took on the role as President in 2006. Together with the other Directors, they were instrumental in successfully implementing and growing many ongoing culture-related events, including Shinnen-kai, Children's Day, Members' Day, Japan representation at Raleigh International Festival and especially the Natsu-Matsuri Festival. Natsu-Matsuri held at State Fair Ground has become the largest Japan related event in the Triangle, gathering over 6,000 visitors in summer 2019. Nippon Club was awarded by the Council General of Atlanta for its contribution to the Japanese community in 2016.

Rocky and Yoko Iwashima have also been heavily involved with the activities of affiliated clubs of the Nippon Club. In 2002, they founded Triangle Taiko Club, a very active club with more than 30 stage performances annually. They also founded Special Taiko group for the athletes of Special Olympic games in 2008 as a brother group of Triangle Taiko, and they made a trip to Japan with drummers invited by Nippon Taiko Foundation Japan in 2010. They are now a part of Raleigh City's Park & Recreation community service program. Yoko is also very active in coordinating other clubs activities such as Bon-Odori club and Tea Ceremony club.