



METHODIST HOSPITAL

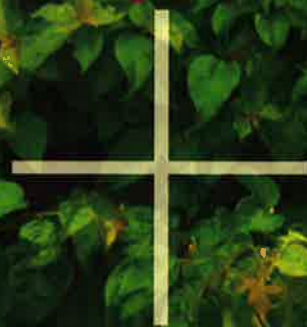
SPRING | SUMMER 2015

# HEALTHSMART

SAN GABRIEL VALLEY

## LISA SUGIMOTO

Family History,  
Culture Taught her  
to Serve Others  
with Humility



## CRYSTAL BALL 2015

Honoring Richard  
and Ivy Sun

*Kenny Loggins  
To Headline*

*Preventive  
Health Advice  
from Experts*

*Doctor Directory  
by Specialty*





# LISA SUGIMOTO

## FAMILY HISTORY, CULTURE TAUGHT HER TO SERVE OTHERS WITH HUMILITY

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**D**r. Lisa Sugimoto, Ed.D., a third generation Japanese American (Sansei), has a rich family history of optimistic tenacity that has served her well throughout her career of helping and advising others.

When they were just teens, both her parents, along with their families, were among the thousands of American-born citizens of Japanese descent who were moved to U.S. concentration camps in Arizona during WWII.

It was the “grin and bear it” and “make the most of it” philosophies, an important part of the Japanese culture, that gave her parents the resilience to persevere through this harsh time.

These “when life gives you lemons, make lemonade” attitudes of hopeful confidence are still good advice to live by.

“Learning and knowledge,” Lisa’s father taught her, “are the two things that no one can take from you.”

From her mother, she learned about the consequences of one’s own actions – cause and effect.

Lisa cites a childhood anecdote about how she and her younger brother, Nathan, were chasing each other around the kitchen one day while her mother was preparing for

guests. Inevitably, the large glass container of drinking water sitting atop its flimsy stand (water bottles used to be glass instead of plastic) was knocked over and broken, spilling water everywhere.

“It was the only time I really remember my mother getting upset. But she just said calmly but firmly: ‘you two have to clean this up,’” Lisa said. “It’s not about punishing someone over ‘spilled milk.’ It is about teaching what to do next – to learn from mistakes and then move on.”

The retired Pasadena City College (PCC) Superintendent-President, who still teaches classes at UCLA, also volunteers countless hours with community organizations. Methodist Hospital is fortunate to be one of these. Lisa has served the last two years on the hospital’s foundation board and is active in fund-raising efforts.

Her involvement with the foundation started with her attending social and fund-raising events. Methodist Hospital dermatologist Dr. Shirley Chi invited Lisa to one such event, and the women later shared a table at the annual Crystal Ball gala. While attending these and other affairs, Lisa heard many great

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comments about the hospital. One thing led to another, and she found herself serving on the foundation's Emergency Services Council.

"I heard a lot of good information from very supportive and kind people who were involved in resolving important issues," she said.

Lisa remembered when her mother had undergone surgery at Methodist Hospital several years ago. The care and treatment she and her family received, along with the many kind and thoughtful words she heard about the hospital, and her friend, Shirley Chi, led her to want to become involved.

Born to George and Ruri Sugimoto in Pasadena, Lisa grew up there, starting high school at John Muir. The family later moved to South Pasadena, where Lisa graduated from South Pasadena High School. After attending USC and PCC, Lisa graduated from UC San Diego with a bachelor's in sociology.

Her plans to go to law school were "rerouted" by a friend, who suggested that she would be better suited as a rehabilitation counselor working with people. Lisa took the advice and then received a "full ride" scholarship to USC, getting her master's in education, specializing in vocational rehabilitation counseling, in 1977.

Lisa spent many years as a community college counselor, first at PCC, then at Cerritos College. Cerritos had a very diverse group of students, but most did not go on to four-year schools for degrees. During her five years there, Lisa wrote grants and helped increase the student transfer rate to four-year colleges. She later spent 14 years as the dean of counseling and student support services at Long Beach City College.

While working as a counselor for business students at PCC, she enrolled and completed business classes to better help her students. A colleague suggested that she get another master's, so she did. In 1988 she received her MBA from USC.

Ten years later she applied to the Educational Leadership Program at UCLA. She was admitted to the doctoral program and in 2000 received her degree.

Lisa served as VP of student services at PCC and in 2009 agreed to serve for a year as interim superintendent-president while the board searched for a permanent one. She allowed herself to be convinced to stay on another year doing fundraising for the school before finally "retiring."

During that last year, she is proud to say that as superintendent-president she was able to award honorary diplomas to the Japanese Americans who were students at PCC during WWII and were unable to complete their degrees due to their evacuation and relocation to U.S. concentration camps. During an emotional commencement ceremony in June of 2010, the survivors, their children or grandchildren were presented their long-overdue honorary degrees.

Now retired, at 61, she enjoys teaching classes at UCLA, helping the Go For Broke National Education Center, serving on the hospital foundation board and a host of other activities. Lisa's parents still live in Pasadena. George, who was the youngest boy of nine children, started KGS Electronics as an entrepreneur businessman in the early 1960s. His son, Nathan, now runs the successful avionics electronics business in Arcadia.

Without doubt her parents have been the big influences

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in her life, but Lisa has also gleaned great advice from other mentors.

Other mentors besides her parents include Ernestine Moore, retired PCC vice president. Lisa remembers the sign on her desk proclaiming proudly: "the best man for the job is a woman."

Lisa also considers Beverly O'Neill, former superintendent-president of Long Beach City College and three-term Long Beach mayor, a great mentor, who taught Lisa "you don't have to be tough to make tough decisions; you just have to make the tough decisions."

Life often has a way of going full circle. One of Lisa's passions in retirement is her volunteer fund-raising work with the Go For Broke National Education Center. The Go For Broke organization works to preserve the legacy of Japanese-Americans who bravely served in WWII. A new education exhibit, which will be located in downtown Little Tokyo, is slated to open in early 2016.

Even as Lisa works with this group, connecting with others in the community, she is pleased to hear good things about Methodist Hospital. When a board member from the Go For Broke organization heard that Lisa was on the Methodist foundation board, he had to tell her that his emergency room experience at Methodist Hospital was the best he had ever had.

"It is very affirming to me to hear such comments about the hospital," Lisa said.



Lisa's parents, Ruri and George Sugimoto (photo courtesy of Keiro Senior Care)

