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On Saturday, March 21 from noon to 6 p.m., the East San Gabriel Valley Japanese Community Center and the City of West Covina will host the Annual West Covina Cherry Blossom Festival. This year's festival will return to South Hills Plaza, 1420 S. Azusa Ave., at the corner of Azusa Ave and Aroma Drive. Additional parking can be found nearby at Coronado School and South Hills Academy. Shuttle services will be provided all day by the City of West Covina. The event is free and open to the public.

This will also be the grand reopening of Marukai Japanese Market. Marukai is in the process of a multimillion-dollar remodel project to provide a state-of-the-art shopping experience with a variety of store improvements. The Cherry Blossom Festival is an opportunity for residents to learn about Japanese culture, sample a variety of Japanese and Japanese-American cuisines – gyoza, chicken teriyaki, spam musubi, etc – enjoy traditional music and dance performances, watch a judo demonstration, and be entertained by Japanese Taiko drums. There will also be a special presentation by the West Covina City Council and a cherry blossom tree on display.

For several years, the East San Gabriel Valley Japanese Community Center and the City of West Covina have partnered on various projects and programs, including the promotion and preservation of the cultural heritage unique to Japanese-American members of our community. The East San Gabriel Valley Japanese Community Center and the City of West Covina also sponsor the City's Sister City Program with the city of Ohtawara, Japan. Funds raised from the Cherry Blossom Festival will assist the Sister City Student Exchange Program to occur this summer, as well as the various social, artistic, recreational and educational programs offered at the East San Gabriel Valley Japanese Community Center. For additional information, call the East San Gabriel Valley Japanese Community Center at (626) 960-2566 or the City of West Covina at (626) 939-8430.