

SynthesAizu

June 2021
Volume 1 Issue 6

Association News

Covid Vaccine Updates in Aizu Wakamatsu

Vaccinations Underway for Residents Ages 65 +

On May 17th, Aizu Wakamatsu finally began distributing vaccines to residents ages 65 and older. The city began accepting vaccination reservations on May 10th, and as of May 24th, over 63% of residents ages 65 and older had made a reservation to receive their vaccine. This accounts for roughly 24% of the total vaccine-eligible population in Aizu Wakamatsu (all residents over the age of 16).

Tentative Vaccination Schedule Announced

At the end of April, Aizu Wakamatsu City released a 13-page document outlining the city's vaccine program. Included in the document was the following (tentative) schedule for vaccine distribution:

Eligibility Group	Vaccine Pass Distribution
Healthcare Workers	Late March
Residents Ages 65+	Late April
Those with underlying medical conditions & Those working in elderly care facilities	End of July/ Early August
Residents under the age of 65	September



Annual AWIA General Member's Meeting

In last month's newsletter, we announced the dates for the AWIA's annual General Assembly (General Member's Meeting). The meeting was originally scheduled for June 6th, but due to the sudden spike in coronavirus cases in Aizu, we have decided to cancel this year's meeting. Instead, we have sent out a set of documents summarizing the AWIA's activities over the last fiscal year, and outlining our plans for this year. If you receive the paper version of the newsletter by mail, the documents will be enclosed in the same envelope. Please read through the documents carefully, and return the enclosed approval postcard to the AWIA by **Thursday, June 10th.**

AWIA Caption Contest!



Caption this photo for a chance to win!

The contest winner will receive a special prize honoring Aizu's Olympic Host Town connection with Thailand!

How to Enter

Submit your caption by commenting on our "Caption Contest" post on Facebook or Instagram, or by sending us an email at mail@awia.jp titled "Caption Contest."

Selection Process

At the end of the submission period, the AWIA staff will review all the captions and vote on our favorites to select the winner. Please submit captions in English, Japanese, or Chinese.

Deadline

Please submit your caption by **Sunday, June 20th.** The winner will be announced in the July newsletter and on our social media!



会津若松市国際交流協会

TEL (0242) 27-3703

EMAIL: mail@awia.jp

AIZU WAKAMATSU INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION

Aizu Olympic Host Town Culture Showcase

Aizu Wakamatsu city has the honor of serving as the Olympic Host Town for Thailand's national boxing team. In 2018 and 2019, the boxing team visited Aizu for pre-Olympic training camps and cultural exchange activities. Since then, the city has hosted a number of Thai-themed events to bring the culture of Thailand closer to Aizu. This year, on Jun 27th, the city will host a special event showcasing Thai culture and introducing some of the highlights of Olympic boxing. The event will kick off with a talk on Thai culture by a special guest speaker, Ms. Chiharu Higo, who studied the Thai language at Tokyo University of Foreign Studies. The talk will be followed by a beginner-friendly boxing workshop in the afternoon. Guests can also enjoy a taste of some popular Thai foods next door at Aiyumu Café, and try their hands at a traditional Thai handicraft.



Ms. Chiharu Higo

Image Source: <https://koriplanning.com/>



Date: Sunday, June 27th 10:00 - 15:00

Place: AiCt Building

〒965-0872 Higashisakaemachi-1, Kitademarku St.

Sign Up: 0242-39-1306

Please contact the Aizu Wakamatsu Sports Division at the number above by Friday, June 25th to sign up.*

*Limited to 20 participants

**Please note that this event may be rescheduled or moved online depending on the novel coronavirus situation in Aizu. Please check the AWIA Facebook page or the Aizu Wakamatsu City website for the latest information.

Try Making a Traditional Craft from Thailand at Home!

The “pla tapian” is a traditional handicraft from central Thailand. Classic pla tapian are made by weaving palm fronds together to resemble the shape of a fish. The fish is believed to be a type of carp, which symbolizes strength, prosperity, and good health. Now, pla tapian are popularly made with ribbons or colorful paper, and crafted into decorative hanging mobiles. The mobiles are sometimes placed over a baby's crib for good luck.

Try making your own pla tapian at home!

You will need:

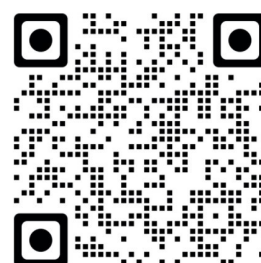
- Scissors
- 2 Strips of paper or ribbon 10mm wide and 420mm long.



To create a 3D pla tapian like the ones shown in the photo above, just scan the QR code below to watch the instructional video. For an easier version, just follow the steps below!

↓ **Instruction Video!** ↓

<p>1</p> <p>Prepare two strips of origami paper 10mm wide and 420mm long.</p>	<p>2</p> <p>Fold both strips in half at a slight angle.</p>	<p>3</p> <p>Fold one of the pieces again to create an “M” shape.</p>	<p>4</p> <p>Push the remaining piece through the “M” as shown.</p>
<p>5</p> <p>Fold the ◊ piece back through the “M” as shown.</p>	<p>6</p> <p>Pull the Δ tab through.</p>	<p>7</p> <p>Flip over, and fold the Δ tab under the portion indicated by the arrow.</p>	<p>8</p> <p>Pull the tab through and gently tighten the weave as needed.</p>
<p>9</p> <p>Trim excess paper as desired. Complete!</p>	<p>Share your Pla Tapian Scene with us! Share photos of your completed pla tapian with us on Instagram using either of the hashtags below! ★</p> <p>#awiaplatapian #awiaプラータピアン</p>		



<https://youtu.be/zUyW35ni5Sk>



Surgeries

I had my tonsillectomy surgery in December 2020 here in Aizu. I want to share my experience with surgery here in Japan and compare it with surgeries I've had in America. Of course, these are only my personal experiences, so it's not representative of all of America or Japan. Let's get to it!

Sarah Markee came to Aizu from the United States as an English teacher on the JET Program. She and her husband Phil have been active members of the AWIA for nearly 2 years.



First of all, let's talk about doctors. In America there is one doctor people go to for everything called a primary care physician (PCP). They are a general practitioner and the first person someone goes to for medical treatment. If you have an ailment that needs further expertise, from for example an Ear, Nose, and Throat (ENT) doctor, the specialist must be referred by the primary care physician. In Japan, however, people go directly to whichever doctor provides the service they need. This was nice because I no longer had to wait on doctors to refer me, which takes a long time. The downside, however, was that every time I had to visit a new doctor for a different treatment, they did not know my medical history and I had to start fresh each time.

Second, let's look at the treatment length. In America, a tonsillectomy is originally scheduled as an outpatient procedure. This means I would get the surgery and then go home the same day. I would come back to the doctor's clinic after a few days, then a week later, and then a month later, until I was fully recovered and didn't need to return. I would mostly stay at home resting to get better with family who would help take care of me. But in Japan, a tonsillectomy requires a minimum of ten days in the hospital after surgery. I was visited by nurses checking my fluids, heart rate, temperature, pain levels, and I would see my doctor every few days. Finally, when they saw that I was recovering well enough, I was allowed to leave. I think this speaks to the level of service and care that Japanese people provide.

Third, let's talk about medicine. In America, after surgery I was given Norco for my post-surgery pain. It contains an opioid and non-opioid pain reliever. I only took it for the couple days it was prescribed, but I felt no pain! It was great! Strong medication after surgeries is normal in America. In Japan, I was given lower doses of medicine that wouldn't last as long, and I would usually still feel pain. When I told the doctors of my pain, and the medicine I had in America, they were all very surprised! I was told they were not allowed to issue anything similar to what I had in America, because it was too dangerous. How interesting!

Finally, there's the cost. In America, there is no universal healthcare program so people must get their healthcare from public or private health insurance providers. My insurance for surgery in America was the public low-income-based state insurance. It would fully cover the costs of everything such as the surgery, x-rays, tests, medication, and doctor visits, but only if I qualified for that health insurance. When I no longer qualified for state insurance, I tried using my teacher's insurance for my tonsillectomy. But I would have had to spend at least \$4,000-8,000 USD just for the surgery because my insurance did not cover it. In Japan, I finally had the tonsillectomy. In Japan there is universal healthcare, so I can bring my insurance card to any doctor, and only pay 30% of the cost! I also qualified for a low-income rate based on my salary. In the end, I paid about 230,000 JPY, which is about \$2,000 USD. Finally, because I had my company insurance in addition to national healthcare, I was able to get a full reimbursement with only a 5,000 JPY copay! It was amazing to see the difference in cost with national healthcare in addition to the private insurance. Even without the private insurance or low-income rate, it was still much cheaper to get the surgery done in Japan.

In conclusion, I think there are pros and cons to each country's health and insurance systems. We also have to consider the fact that, when experiencing a new culture and different customs, it may not feel comfortable at first. I'm extremely grateful for all the support and care I've been given, both in America and Japan. I hope this was a helpful overview of my experiences with healthcare and surgeries in both countries!

Events in June*

Other Information

Novel Coronavirus Notice

As you may already be aware, Aizu Wakamatsu has recently experienced an unprecedented spike in novel coronavirus cases. Between May 1st and May 20th, nearly 300 new cases were confirmed in Aizu Wakamatsu city. The Fukushima prefectural government issued a statement on May 1st asking all residents to exercise extreme caution and avoid all non-essential outings until May 16th. They later expanded the request to a regional state of emergency, effective from May 16th until May 31st.

Here at the AWIA, one of our staff members tested positive for coronavirus on April 30th. Following instructions from the regional health center, the AWIA office was closed from May 1st to May 11th, during which time our offices were sanitized and our remaining staff members all tested negative for the virus. The infected member was able to make a full recovery, and we have all returned safely to the office. Thank you very much to everyone who went out of their way to support us during this time.

On May 11th, the AWIA office was re-opened, and normal business hours resumed. Due to the city-wide spike in coronavirus cases, all in-person events for the month of May, including our Japanese Conversation Classes, were canceled or postponed. We are terribly sorry to everyone who was looking forward to our May events, such as the "Little Trip" Seminar and Library Open House. We do plan to host those events when the Covid-19 situation has improved, so keep an eye on our social media for updates.

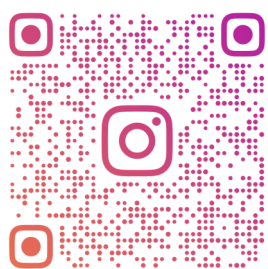
In the interest of safety, we also implemented a few new infection prevention measures at the AWIA office. Screens have been placed between the desks, and we are staggering our lunch times. We have also begun checking temperatures of everyone who enters the office, and we've put a pause on serving tea to visitors.

We sincerely hope that the summer months will bring a drop in the number of cases, but in the meantime we hope that all of you will remain vigilant and continue to practice basic infection prevention measures. If you do begin to feel unwell, or you suspect you may have been infected with the novel coronavirus, please contact the Fukushima Covid Hotline at the number below (Interpretation Available in 19 languages):

Fukushima Prefecture Coronavirus Hotline
0120-992-860

1	TU	13:30 Nihongo Salon
2	WE	
3	TH	18:30 Japanese Conversation Class (PM)
4	FR	10:00 Japanese Conversation Class (AM)
5	SA	10:00 HS Student's Intl. Exchange Wksh
6	SU	Closed
7	MO	Closed
8	TU	13:30 Nihongo Salon
9	WE	
10	TH	General Meeting Response Form Deadline 18:30 Japanese Conversation Class (PM)
11	FR	10:00 Japanese Conversation Class (AM)
12	SA	
13	SU	10:00 Children's Nihongo Hiroba
14	MO	Closed
15	TU	13:30 Nihongo Salon
16	WE	
17	TH	18:30 Japanese Conversation Class (PM)
18	FR	10:00 Japanese Conversation Class (AM)
19	SA	
20	SU	AWIA Caption Contest Deadline
21	MO	Closed
22	TU	13:30 Nihongo Salon
23	WE	
24	TH	18:30 Japanese Conversation Class (PM)
25	FR	10:00 Japanese Conversation Class (AM)
26	SA	13:30 Newsletter Release Preparation
27	SU	10:00 Host Town Showcase Event 10:00 Children's Nihongo Hiroba
28	MO	Closed
29	TU	13:30 Nihongo Salon
30	WE	

*Events are subject to change if the regional state of emergency is extended for Fukushima Prefecture.



We're on Instagram!
Follow us for photos and news about our upcoming events!



AWIA_PHOTO



Visit our Facebook page for the latest updates in multiple languages!

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