

# SynthesAizu

December 2021  
Volume 1 Issue 12

## Association News

### “FIND” English Club : Christmas Session

Come join the “FIND” English Conversation Club for their special Christmas session! “FIND” was originally created to give students an opportunity to practice natural English conversation in a casual setting. Usually, participation is limited to high school students and speakers of English who act as volunteers to facilitate conversation. However, many other people have recently expressed interest in the club, so for their Christmas session, “FIND” will be open to everyone regardless of age or language ability! Please check out the information below if you would like to join!

<b>When</b>	December 25th (Sat) 14:30 - 16:00
<b>Where</b>	Aizu Wakamatsu City Learning Center, 3F Lecture Rooms 5, 6
<b>Seats</b>	Limited to 20 participants
<b>Sign-Up</b>	Please contact the AWIA by <u>December 24th (Fri)</u>

### Holiday Office Closures

The AWIA office will be closed for the New Year holidays from: **December 29th (Tue) ~ January 3rd (Mon)**

Regular operating hours will resume on January 4th (Tues) from 9:00 to 17:45. “Nihongo Salon” will end on December 21st and resume on January 18th.

We hope you all have a warm holiday season, and we look forward to seeing you in the new year!



## The 2021 “AWIA Cup” Bowling Event!

At long last, we are bringing back our annual end-of-year bowling event! Come “smash” away any lingering worries from the past year, and make some fun, fresh memories with the AWIA community!

We will be grouping participants into teams beforehand, so feel free to join on your own or as a group. This event is open to members and non-members alike, so you are welcome to build a team with your friends! Everyone will compete together over the course of 2 games. Winners will be determined from team scores and individual scores, so players of all skill levels are encouraged to join.

**That’s right, even total beginners are welcome!!**

(The AWIA office will be closed during this event.)

**When** December 12th (Sun) 14:30 - 17:00

**Where** Sport Aizu Royal Bowl  
3-53 Nakamachi, Aizuwakamatsu  
(Free Parking Garage available)

**Price** AWIA Members: ¥1,000 / Non-members: ¥ 1,200  
(Includes game fee (x2) + shoe rental)

**Spots** Limited to 30 people

**Sign-up** Please contact the AWIA by phone or email by December 8th (Wed) to sign up!



**Member Discount!**



会津若松市国際交流協会

AIZU WAKAMATSU INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION

TEL (0242) 27-3703

EMAIL: mail@awia.jp

## This Month in Aizu Wakamatsu

### Ornament Workshop

Have you ever made a Japanese-style New Year's ornament? Come join our friends at the Akabeko Salon for this fun, hands-on ornament workshop! Spots are very limited, so sign up ASAP!



<b>When</b>	December 18th (Sat), 13:00 - 14:00
<b>Where</b>	"Akabeko Salon" 1-Chome 9-29 Omachi (Inside the Aizu Area Information Center)
<b>Cost</b>	500 JPY
<b>Sign-up</b>	Please contact Emilie by email at <a href="mailto:salon-akabeko@bekonon.com">salon-akabeko@bekonon.com</a>

### New Year's Eve in Aizu

I love the Japanese New Year.

In my hometown in America, New Year's is a relatively superficial holiday where most people celebrate by partying late into the evening with a toast of champagne at midnight. Families gather around the TV to watch New Year's day parades and the ball drop from Time's Square. All the while, people are blasted with a constant stream of advertisements for various gyms, diet programs, and "superfood" companies looking to target the millions of people who made "get in shape" their New Year's resolution.



But New Year's in Japan is different. Last year, I spent my first New Year's in Aizu, and delighted in the many local New Year traditions. I went with a friend to Tsuruga-jo on New Year's eve, where it felt like half the city had gathered at the base of the castle

to ring in 2021. A few stalls were set up around the castle's shrine selling charms and fortunes for the new year, and I imagine outside of Covid times there would have been rows of food and drink stalls too. The next morning, I was greeted by a fresh blanket of snow, and a house sparking from the end-of-year deep clean. A little box of mochi sweets sat on my kotatsu next to the arrow-shaped charm I bought at the



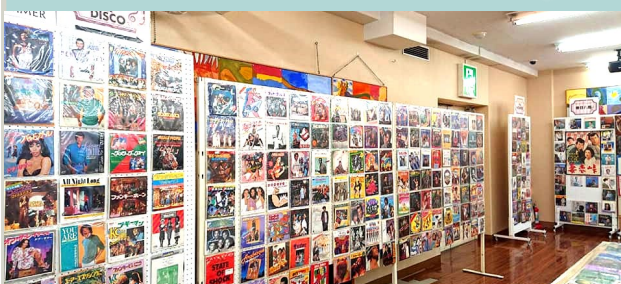
shrine. Of course, no New Year's would be complete without celebratory food, so I sampled Aizu's special "kodzuyu" soup with sweet red beans and sake.

Japan's ceremonial approach to New Year's makes it truly feel like one is passing over a significant landmark, and I find it always gets me in the right state of mind for the year to come. If you find yourself in Aizu this New Year's, I hope you'll enjoy some of Aizu's traditions for yourself!



### "50 Years of Pop" Record Jacket Exhibit

Free!



Are you a music lover or a fan of Japanese city pop? Don't miss this nostalgic exhibit of vintage record sleeves and album art from around the world!

**November 23rd (Tue) - December 24th (Fri)**  
**Open from 10:00 - 17:45**

Sinmei-dori Tsutaya Building, 3F Gallery Space  
(2 floors below the AWIA office)

### "Gift of Winter 2021" Gallery and Marketplace at Alte Meister



"Ki no Kobito"  
Assembly Kit

Our friends at Alte Meister have announced a special winter gallery and marketplace event! The gallery showcases original artwork and handmade items from the company's talented artisans, and the marketplace features a wide range of locally produced gifts and sweets, just in time for the holidays!

*"Winter has once again fallen on Aizu Wakamatsu. At Space Alte Meister, we welcome you to ring in the holiday season with us. Whether you are giving a gift or receiving one, these hand-selected items are sure to warm your heart."*

**When** November 25th (Thu) - December 26th (Sun)  
10:00 - 18:00 \*Closed Tuesdays

**Where** Space Alte Meister  
9-23 Honmachi, Aizuwakamatsu

**Cafe** "Space Café Okunokura" is open Saturdays and Sundays from 11:30 - 15:00 (L.O. 14:30)





## Member Spotlight: Loida Watanabe



Loida Watanabe comes from the capital city of Manila in the Philippines, and has lived in Japan for 18 years. As a big fan of karaoke, Loida picked up hiragana and katakana on her own by reading Japanese song lyrics at karaoke. She has been a student of the AWIA Japanese Conversation class since 2015, where she focuses primarily on studying kanji. In this interview, Loida shares with us what inspired her to study kanji, and the memories she associates with some of her favorite kanji characters.



### Q. When you first arrived in Japan, what was your initial impression?

It was so cold! Especially here in Aizu, the winter feels quite long. I like snow, but *Yukikatashi* (Aizu slang for “shoveling snow”) always makes me catch a cold. When I first came to Japan, many people pronounced my name, Loida, in the Japanese way, so it sounded like “Roida.” I couldn’t understand that people were talking to me, so I asked everyone to call me “Sara” instead. I used to watch anime every day when I lived in the Philippines, and I loved the show “Princess Sara.” Sara was always such a good person even when things were difficult, so I borrowed her name.

### Q. What is your favorite Japanese food?

Natto. I didn’t like it at first, but when I heard people say that it makes you smarter, I wanted to try giving it to my son. So, I did my best to eat it too. I tried adding things like canned tuna and leek, and I’d mix it 40 times. Before I knew it, I’d grown to really enjoy it! I also make lots of Philippine food at home for friends’ birthdays and other celebrations. When I go back to the Philippines, I eat balut (fertilized duck egg) and other things that can’t be found in Japan.

### Q. What do you enjoy doing on your days off?

I work in my garden. I grow tomatoes, peppers, broccoli, lettuce, eggplant, celery, radishes, and a few other flowers and vegetables. I wanted to try growing my own food, so I turned my yard into a vegetable garden. I believe the balance of the four seasons makes vegetables in Aizu so sweet and delicious. I enjoy working in the field during the rainy season in June and July, although cutting the grass after the rain is a bit of a pain. In the back of the house we have a pond with water lilies, so I put a container there for goldfish. We have 8 bright orange goldfish, but they are hibernating for the winter now.

### Q. Why did you choose to focus on Kanji in your Japanese lessons?

After living in Japan for about 4 months, I learned how to read hiragana and katakana. Since I really enjoy singing, I started reading and memorizing karaoke songs in Japanese. After a while, I could comfortably get through everyday

conversations in Japanese too. Still, I had trouble reading all the kanji on the paperwork that came from my son’s school. I couldn’t understand them, but that motivated me to learn kanji so I would be able to read and write more easily.

### Q. Do you have a favorite Kanji?

My favorite Japanese kanji is 愛 (*ai*, lit. “love”). It was the very first kanji I ever learned. After all, It appears in karaoke songs pretty often, haha. Still, it’s quite difficult to write. At first, I couldn’t fit the whole character into the square on the practice paper.

My favorite Japanese word is 感謝 (*kanshya*, lit. “gratitude”). When I arrived in Japan, I experienced so much kindness from the people in my community, and I really want to express my joy and gratitude for everyone’s generosity.



A Japanese lesson with volunteer teacher, Ms. Takahashi.

I also like the song “糸” (*Ito*, lit. “threads”) by Nakajima Miyuki. Some people associate it with the “red string of fate,” but I think it also encompasses the feeling of connection between people. Fate may lead us to fall in love with someone, and even if we suffer from the pain of a breakup, that experience makes us stronger and allows us to grow. Even among friends, our lives become more fun thanks to the connection we have with those close to us.

Every encounter throughout the course of our lives has the potential to turn into a connection, and give new meaning to the world around us. Even if we are always going to the same places at the same times, the people we meet in those places have the potential to change the landscape of our everyday lives. I find this miracle of human connection so fascinating and strange.

## Events in December

1	WE	
2	TH	
3	FR	
4	SA	14:00 Yummy French Kitchen Crepe Wksp.
5	SU	Closed
6	MO	Closed
7	TU	13:30 Nihongo Salon
8	WE	
9	TH	
10	FR	
11	SA	13:30 Hello World Club 14:30 FIND English Conversation Club
12	SU	15:00 "AWIA Cup" Bowling Event
13	MO	Closed
14	TU	13:30 Nihongo Salon
15	WE	
16	TH	
17	FR	
18	SA	
19	SU	Closed
20	MO	Closed
21	TU	
22	WE	
23	TH	
24	FR	
25	SA	13:30 Newsletter Preparation 14:30 FIND English Conversation Club
26	SU	
27	MO	Closed
28	TU	
29	WE	Closed
30	TH	Closed
31	FR	Closed

## Other Information

### Christmas Market in Aizu

Check out this year's Aizu Christmas Market! This 2-day Christmas festival will have booths, activities, performances, and a night-time illumination to get guests in the Christmas spirit!



**When** December 18th (Sat) - December 19th (Sun)  
11:00 - 18:00

**Where** Roadside Station Aizu Yugawa Aizu-bange  
Gochonome-78-1 Sanome, Yugawa, Kawanuma

### Overseas Holiday Travel and Covid

As many people prepare to travel overseas and visit family for the holidays, we would like to provide some tips and resources to help navigate the convoluted world of traveling during covid.

**The golden rule is: when in doubt, check with your airline and your country's embassy!**

#### Tip 1: Find yourself a cheap PCR Test!

Most airlines currently require passengers to present a negative PCR test taken within 72 hours of boarding. PCR testing is available at the airport, but the testing available in the international terminal can cost over 30,000JPY!! However, testing aimed at Japanese domestic travelers is also available in other terminals, and only costs about 2,000JPY. Not every international airline will accept this test since the result is only provided in Japanese, but some airlines like Delta do accept it. Check with your airline before making an appointment to get a test at the airport! (And don't forget to make that appointment!)

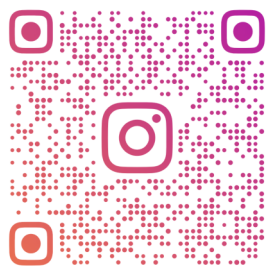


#### Tip 2: Download quarantine apps before landing in Japan.

Under Japan's current quarantine requirements (as of Nov. 25th), all incoming travelers, regardless of vaccination status, are required to quarantine for a minimum of 10 days after arrival. Before leaving the airport, you will be required to download a series of apps that will be used to monitor your status during the quarantine period. It is highly recommended that you download the apps before you get to the airport to save yourself time and avoid any internet or data limitation issues.

#### Tip 3: Get real advice from other expats who know the ropes.

Follow the "Return to Japan Support Group" on Facebook for the latest travel updates and real testimonials from expats who are traveling to and from Japan during Covid times.



**We're on Instagram!**

Follow us for photos and news about our upcoming events!



**AWIA\_PHOTO**

<http://facebook.com/awiajp>



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

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