

AIZU WAKAMATSU INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION MONTHLY ENGLISH NEWSLETTER

SynthesAizu

February 2022
Volume 2 Issue 2

Association News

Young Adult Sports Club “Uniship” - Try bouldering with us!

Join us for the second meeting of “Uniship,” a sports club created by young adults, for young adults!

If you are looking to make new friends in Aizu through sports and other activities, Uniship is the perfect place for you! Uniship was designed to provide a welcoming environment for people to try new things and meet new people, so don't be shy if you are not good at sports or if this is your first time to join. The number of participants will be limited for this meeting of Uniship due to Covid restrictions, so please be sure to sign up quickly if you are interested.



| | |
|---------|--|
| Date | Saturday, February 26th |
| Time | Session A: 13:30 -15:00* Session B: 15:00 -16:30* *Limited to 5 people per session |
| Place | ENISHI Gym, 1-19 Sakaemachi |
| Cost | 1300JPY / person |
| Bring | drink, towel, change of clothes |
| Sign Up | Scan the QR code on the right, or email mail@awia.jp |



AWIA Caption Contest Winners!



Many thanks to our winner **Sarah Markee** for submitting her caption to our Caption Contest!

“Remember to give gifts from the heart and not for your pride, or you will become a Tengu like me!”

(Check out our Japanese newsletter “FIND” to see the winning Japanese caption too!)

“Yasashi Nihongo” Conversation Workshop

This Japanese Language workshop is a fantastic opportunity for beginner- or intermediate-level Japanese students who want to practice chatting with native speakers in a relaxed environment. Native Japanese participants will be joining the workshop to learn about “Yasashi Nihongo,” a variation of Japanese that is more accessible for both non-native speakers and native speakers with language disabilities. Japanese language students are encouraged to join in for conversation-based games and the opportunity to chat in “easy” Japanese!



| | |
|---------|---|
| Date | Sunday, February 27th, 14:00 - 15:30 |
| Place | Online via Zoom OR Aizu City Learning Center, 3F Lecture Room 1* *Limited to 10 in-person participants |
| Sign Up | Send an email to mail@awia.jp by <u>Friday, Feb 25th</u> |



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

Aizu Painted Candle Festival at Tsuruga Castle

What better way to light up the dark evenings of winter than with Aizu's traditional hand-painted candles? The annual Aizu Painted Candle Festival started during the Edo period as a way to promote Aizu's candles and showcase the ornate detail and care that goes into each one. For the duration of the festival, lit candles will be on display at Tsuruga Castle and Oyakuen Garden, but many businesses around town are also joining in the festivities by decorating their shop windows with candlelight.



Dates: Feb. 11th (Fri) ~ 12th (Sat)

Time: 17:30 ~ 20:00

Place: Tsuruga Castle Grounds, Oyakuen Park

*Event details are subject to change depending on the Covid-19 situation. Please check the event homepage for the latest information: <https://www.aizu.com/erousoku/>

Bye Bye, Akabeko Salon



As we rapidly approach the season of goodbyes in Japan, the AWIA community has a bittersweet goodbye of its own.

Our partner organization, the Akabeko Salon, will sadly be closing its doors later this month. The salon manager, Mrs. Emilie, is moving to be closer to family, so the Akabeko Salon will close on **February 17th**.

Mrs. Emilie opened the Akabeko Salon one year ago as a place for foreign residents in Aizu to relax, share information, and make new friends. Please drop by the Akabeko Salon on one of the days listed below to give Emilie your well wishes!

Akabeko Salon Final Open Days

Feb. 12th (Sat.), 15th (Tue.), & 17th (Thu.), 9:30 - 16:30

The Akabeko Salon is located inside the Aizu Area Information Center (*Omachi 1-9-29*)

Covid-19 and Vaccine Updates

Aizu Wakamatsu Begins Distribution of 3rd (Booster) Vaccine Shot

Starting this month, Aizu Wakamatsu will begin distributing vaccine passes by mail to residents over the age of 65 who are eligible to receive a 3rd dose of the Coronavirus vaccine. In principle, Aizu residents will be eligible to receive a booster shot once 6 months have passed since they completed their second round of vaccinations. Residents under the age of 64 are expected to begin receiving vaccination tickets by mail sometime after March. For more details about scheduling and reservations, please visit the Aizu Wakamatsu City homepage, or check out the English version of the City Newsletter.

Fukushima Prefecture Announces Enhanced Infection Prevention Measures from January 27th to February 20th

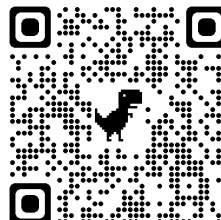
The prefectural government has once again requested a period of enhanced infection prevention measures across the prefecture. The measure includes requests for reduced business hours for restaurants and bars, as well as a general request to the public to **avoid gathering in groups of 5 or more**.

Ring in the Lunar New Year at Home with Chinese Steamed Gyoza!



It's time for the Lunar New Year! Most commonly celebrated in mainland China, lunar new year is also observed by many countries across southeast Asia, including Korea, Singapore, Thailand, and Malaysia. Each culture has their own New Year's traditions, but the most

common way to ring in the lunar new year is with delicious food! In lieu of our January gyoza workshop being postponed due to Covid, we would like to encourage everyone to try making some gyoza at home on their own! Please check out the QR code on the right for the full recipe!



Member Spotlight: Naomi Sato

Mrs. Naomi Sato is a professional translator and interpreter based in Fukushima City. She is currently employed by the Japan International Cooperation Agency, and has been an integral member of many AWIA projects over the last few years. In her spare time, she enjoys many traditional Japanese arts, including kimono, tea ceremony, and flower arranging. In this interview, Mrs. Naomi shares with us the personal and professional challenges she overcame during her 6 months working as an interpreter for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics.

Q. During the Olympics, where did you work and what did you do?

I was employed by a company that supplied the broadcasting equipment used to share the Olympics with viewers around the world. More specifically, I worked as a translator and interpreter for 3 engineers from New Zealand, Benin, and France, respectively. None of them could speak any Japanese, and their Japanese counterparts couldn't speak much English, so it was my job to serve as the bridge between them. We were stationed in a temporary office at the Azuma Baseball Stadium in Fukushima City.

Q. You told us that this was one of the most challenging experiences of your life. What made it so difficult?

The hardest part was that many Japanese social norms didn't make sense to the engineers. For example, the Japanese idea that risk management is essential, and that "preparation is everything," didn't go over well with them. The Japanese staff would say "we're expecting rain and heavy winds tomorrow, so be sure to secure the equipment down before you leave." The engineers would respond "What for? We can just do it if it does start to rain." They also didn't see the point of doing radio calisthenics with everyone in the mornings. Those who don't do them would be sent home for their own safety, so I always warned them, "if you don't do it, I'll be angry with you," which would just make them complain more. Sometimes they would be scolded for suddenly eating cookies during the middle of work, or they would persuade me to let them go home early because they were tired, or because it was raining. There were times when they told me "this is just who we are," and I would sympathize with them, thinking "I suppose you're right." Still,

the stadium rules were very strict, and we needed to follow them.

I'm sure there were times

when the engineers would get frustrated too. If they were annoyed, sometimes they would use the F word, and even asked me to teach them some Japanese swears!

Q. You mentioned that you showed them around Fukushima on your days off. What inspired that?

Since they had come all this way to Japan, I wanted them to be able to make some fun memories. I planned trips to all kinds of places like Hanamiyama, Tsuchiyu Onsen, the Jododaira hiking trails, and Tsuruga Castle. On one trip to the Goshiki Lakes, one of the engineers actually fell out of the canoe! Haha. We also went out drinking, but it became a problem because they would always sneak off. I felt like the older sister to a group of rowdy boys, always wondering what mischief they would get themselves into next. Sometimes they worried about me and asked, "Naomi, are you sure you want us to come? Isn't it troublesome for you?" But, I couldn't help inviting them each time, and without fail, the 3 of them would always join me.

As a job, it was a very difficult task, but as an individual, I had a lot of fun spending time with them. I think over time, they also gained a deeper understanding of Japanese culture. I watched them slowly get better at cooperating with the Japanese staff members. At the end of our time together, they even gave me a handmade letter and photo album. In the letter they wrote that "the weekend trips were the greatest!"

Q. You've worked very hard behind the scenes. Can you give us your final thoughts on the experience?

I feel like I spent half a year in a dream. It was one of the biggest events of my life, and it was a job that I truly felt was worth doing. I've really only told you about 10% of the whole experience. I have so many memories that I'll carry with pride for the rest of my life.

At many points during those 6 months, I found myself wondering, "why are the 4 of us so different? Why do we think in the ways that we do?" Then one day when I went to visit my tea teacher, I found the answer. The idea that "preparation is everything" is one of the fundamental teachings of tea ceremony. Tea ceremony is traditional piece of Japanese culture, and is something inherently understood by most Japanese people. Without realizing it, that fundamental teaching becomes engrained in every aspect of our lives, so much so that we take it for granted. When I became an interpreter, I studied tea and flower arrangement with the desire to share Japanese culture, but I think that part of me has settled down. Now, I love that my job has given me the opportunity to use English to build bonds between different people.



Mrs. Naomi (left) sits with 3 engineers in the gardens of the Historic Ogura Household in Fukushima City

Events in February

| | | |
|----|----|--|
| 1 | TU | 13:30 Nihongo Salon |
| 2 | WE | |
| 3 | TH | |
| 4 | FR | |
| 5 | SA | |
| 6 | SU | Closed |
| 7 | MO | Closed |
| 8 | TU | 13:30 Nihongo Salon |
| 9 | WE | |
| 10 | TH | |
| 11 | FR | Closed |
| 12 | SA | |
| 13 | SU | |
| 14 | MO | Closed |
| 15 | TU | 13:30 Nihongo Salon |
| 16 | WE | |
| 17 | TH | |
| 18 | FR | |
| 19 | SA | |
| 20 | SU | Closed |
| 21 | MO | Closed |
| 22 | TU | 13:30 Nihongo Salon |
| 23 | WE | Closed |
| 24 | TH | |
| 25 | FR | |
| 26 | SA | 13:30 Newsletter Release Preparation 13:30 / 15:00 Uniship Bouldering Event |
| 27 | SU | 13:30 "Yasashi Nihongo" Workshop |
| 28 | MO | Closed |

Other Information

Aizu Dips its Toes into AR - Anime Style

Are you an avid weekend traveler, an Aizu fan, or a lover of goofy anime characters? Have we got a special announcement for you. At the end of December, our friends at Gokujo no Aizu launched a new audio-based AR guide experience for Aizu explorers...complete with its very own anime boys. The audio travel guide is hosted by two friends "Yama" and "Ryu," a comedic duo preparing to audition for roles in a TV travel program. As research for the audition, they decide to explore the "33 Kannon's Pilgrimage," which takes them on various adventures around Fukushima.



君の日常を"音楽"が拡張する

For more details and a list of locations where the audio guides are available, check out the project homepage below:

<https://gokujo-aizu.com/night-museum>

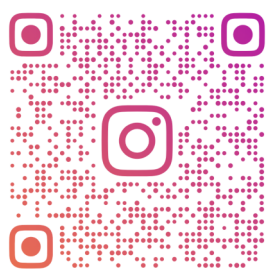


App Store



Google Play

Download
the SARF
app for
free here!



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!

965-0871 Fukushima-ken, Aizu Wakamatsu-shi, Sakae-machi 2-14, Lion D'or Garden 5th Floor

TEL: (0242) 27-3703 | FAX: (0242) 27-3704 | EMAIL: mail@awia.jp | SITE: <http://awia.jp>