

## Events in February

1	WE	
2	TH	
3	FR	
4	SA	
5	SU	Closed
6	MO	Closed
7	TU	
8	WE	
9	TH	
10	FR	
11	SA	Closed
12	SU	10:00 Children's Nihongo Hiroba 10:00 Cultural Understanding Seminar
13	MO	Closed
14	TU	
15	WE	
16	TH	
17	FR	
18	SA	10:00 FIND
19	SU	Closed
20	MO	Closed
21	TU	
22	WE	
23	TH	Closed
24	FR	
25	SA	10:00 Satellite JICA Desk 13:30 Newsletter Preparation
26	SU	10:00 Children's Nihongo Hiroba 14:00 'Little Trip' Series: American Sweets
27	MO	Closed
28	TU	

## New Years Bowling Event



Thanks for joining us at our New Years Bowling Tournament on January 14th!  
Congrats to those who won first place.  
Looking forward to seeing you at future events!

### Chit-Chat with Erika~

Come by the International Association next month and hangout with me! The CIR, Erika! I enjoy playing board games etc., so come challenge me to a game of Dutch Blitz.

I can even tell you about the interesting things I noticed when I went back to Vancouver for Christmas.



It's me!  
(Erika)

**March 4th (Sat) 14:00-16:00**

No registration necessary.

### Temporary closure of the Aizu Library

The library will be closed between February 1 (Wed) and 7 (Tue) to maintain their collection. Newspapers will be available to read on the first floor of the Keikodo from 09:00-19:00.

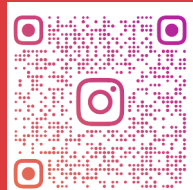
Please return books in the slot at the main entrance of the Keikodo, and return everything else (CDs, DVDs, etc.) to the library desk on or after Feb 8 (Wed)

### Call for Newsletter Volunteers!

Come hang out with us while we fold, stamp, and pack our monthly publications for mailing! Chat with other AWIA members and enjoy this casual volunteer activity.  
No need to sign up, just drop by if you can!

**Date:** February 25, Saturday **Time:** 13:30~

**Place:** AizuWakamatsu International Association Office



### We're on Instagram!

Follow us for photos and news about our upcoming events!



AWIA\_PHOTO

<https://facebook.com/awiajp>



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

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AIZU WAKAMATSU INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION MONTHLY ENGLISH NEWSLETTER

# SynthesAizu

February 2023  
Volume 3 Issue 2

### Association News

### 'Little Trip' Series - America, New England

Join us and make 'Needhams'! They're a specialty from the New England region of the United States of America. Made from a mix of sweetened mashed potatoes and coconut, covered with chocolate, they are a unique dessert that is easy to make!



Flag of New England



Needham

AWIA Member Cameron, from Massachusetts, will teach you about Needhams and New England! Bring an apron!

Sign up -> [mail@awia.jp](mailto:mail@awia.jp)

**When:** Feb 26th (Sun) 14:00~16:00

**Where:** Aizu Keikodo Cooking Studio

**Details:**  
**Limit:** 15 people  
**Members:** 800yen  
**Non-Members:** 1000yen  
**Deadline:** **Feb 18th (Sat)**



Cameron joins us at many events!

### Cultural Understanding Seminar



**Prof. Asano Atsushi: University of Aizu**  
Former Director for JICA in Tunisia, former Mayor of Higashinari Ward in Osaka City.  
**Research Specialty:** Development Economics, SDGs/International Aide.

Prof. Asano is holding this workshop about Culture Understanding. Join him in thinking about how we can make Aizu a more accommodating place to live. This seminar will be in Japanese, but come and share your ideas! If you can't join in, but you have any suggestions on how Aizu could be more welcoming to non-Japanese residents, you can let us know.

Email us at: [mail@awia.jp](mailto:mail@awia.jp)

**When:** February 12th (Sun) 10:00-11:30

**Where:** AizuWakamatsu Keikodo 3F Rm 1

**Details:**  
**Limit:** 20 people (FREE) (ages 12+)  
**Sign-up Deadline:** February 10th (Fri)

### "FIND" English Conversation Club

FIND is a way to meet people from all walks of life interested in speaking English. Play games, do activities, and talk about many things. Contact the AWIA to join!

**When:** Saturday, February 18th 10:00~11:30

**Place:** Aizu Wakamatsu City Learning Center 3F Room 1

**Sign Up:** Contact [mail@awia.jp](mailto:mail@awia.jp) by **Friday, Feb 17th**



## We Updated Our URL

We've increased the security of our homepage, so now you can access it more safely.

[awia.jp](http://awia.jp) --> <https://www.awia.jp>



会津若松市国際交流協会

TEL (0242) 27-3703

EMAIL: [mail@awia.jp](mailto:mail@awia.jp)

AIZU WAKAMATSU INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION



## This Month in Aizu

# Snow Festivals

February ~5th - 26th

Various places throughout Aizu



The Aizu area is known for its snow, and February is one of the snowiest times of the year. There are so many fun things to do in Winter, and this month is full of Snow Festivals all around the region, many of them happening for the first time in three years. Check out these fun events and enjoy the snowy season!

### Aizu Painted Candle Festival

**Dates:** Feb 10-11 (Fri-Sat) ~17:30-20:30

**Place:** Tsuruga-jo Castle, Oyakuen

**Highlights:** Come see the Tsuruga-jo Castle grounds decorated by beautiful hand-painted candles. The castle tower will be lit up, and you can see lanterns made by local preschoolers. You can only see this once a year!



More Details: <https://www.aizu.com/erousoku/program.html>

### Tadami 50th Annual Snow Festival

**Dates:** Feb 10-12 (Fri-Sun)

**Place:** Near Tadami Station

**Highlights:** Enjoy the train ride out to Tadami on the reopened Tadami Line. Tadami has some of the deepest snow in Aizu, so check out the huge snow sculptures!



(Happening for the first time in 3 years, with train access for the first time in 11 years.)

More details: <https://tadamisnowfes.com/>

**Access:**

Train: Tadami Line(~2hrs 50mins from Wakamatsu Stn.)  
Car: R252(~1hr 50mins from Aizuwakamatsu)

### Showa-mura Snow Festival

**Dates:** Feb 26th (Sun) 10:00-15:00

**Place:** Michi no Eki, Karamushi Ori no Sato Showa

**Highlights:** Enjoy the traditional; take part in the tradition of snow bleaching the locally produced plant fibre cloth - Karamushi. Other festivities include a traditional performance, and tug-of-war in the snow.

More Details: <https://showakanko.or.jp/events/snowfes38/>



**Access:**

Shuttle Bus: Free  
From Tajima Station: 9:10 (10:10 at Festival)  
Return: 13:00 (14:00 at Tajima Stn.)

### Ouchijuku Snow Festival

**Dates:** Feb 5-11 (Mon-Sat)

**Place:** Shimogo-machi, Ouchijuku

**Highlights:** Enjoy lanterns made entirely out of snow, and try out some negisoba! Head to Ouchijuku on Feb 11th (Sat) and to performances and traditional ceremonies from 16:00. Fireworks start at 18:00.

More Details: <https://ouchi-juku.com/>

**Access:**

Free Bus:  
18:00 - Departs Wakamatsu Station  
22:00 - Departs Yanaizu Tourist Centre  
55 spots - No reservations  
(First come, first served.)

### NishiAizu Snow Festival

**Dates:** Feb 11-12 (Sat-Sun)

**Place:** NishiAizu Sayuri Park

(Nishiaizu-machi, Tosejima nishibayashi otsu 2529-10)

**Highlights:** Snow Sauna and geta (wooden shoe) kicking contest! Enjoy this small town event. Try driving a snow mobile, and check out the stage events. There will be an esports corner, and opportunity to try flying a drone yourself!

More Details: <https://www.town.nishiaizu.fukushima.jp/site/kanko/6672.html>



### Be careful in the snow!

Watch out for icy walkways, heavy snowfall, snow falling from rooftops, trees or powerlines etc.

Please wear appropriate footwear that won't slip easily, and walk carefully. While clearing snow, work with at least one other person if you can.



## Member Spotlight: Michael and Mikiko Cohen

Michael and Mikiko are an American-Japanese couple. Michael Cohen is American, and has worked at the University of Aizu since it started 30 years ago. Mikiko has experience working in English. They both love nature and outdoor activities and have been together for a long time.



We interviewed Michael and Mikiko about their relationship.

**Q: What was your first impression of each other?**

**Michael:** We met by chance at a Tokyo chess club, and we happened to be sitting next to each other. I don't really remember it, but I think we had fun? Well, we went out every day the follow week anyway.

**Mikiko:** I thought he was a bit weird. He had a pencil tucked behind his ear! We happened to leave at the same time, and since it was raining, we shared an umbrella to the station. We exchanged business cards, and WOW he was a professor! He didn't look like one, haha Later, he called me up and asked me out.

**Michael:** I wanted to go biking with her, so I bought her a bike. We went to date spots like Inokashira Park, and Kichijoji Temple, the movies etc. We went to the Bridgestone Museum of Art\* all the time. About a year later, we got married. (\*now the Artizon Museum)

**Q: Why did you move to Aizu, and what did you think?**

**Michael:** In a Sound Research Journal, I saw that the University of Aizu opened in 1993 and was looking for teachers. I told her, "hey, I'm thinking of applying here..."

**Mikiko:** I thought "Aizu? I think I went there for a school trip in Junior High" and that was about it. I never thought that I, born and raised in Tokyo, would be raising my kids in Tohoku. Back then, the City was doing all it could to support and welcome the University of Aizu foreign staff. When we moved, 3 whole volunteers came to help out, holding the baby, going out with me to buy toilet paper and all that. It was a huge help. In our apartment building, there were Chinese, Russian, Brazilian, and Korean people all living there. I was the only Japanese person. During the day, there was no one there, and since I wasn't used to the rural lifestyle, I was quite lonely.

**Q: What language do you use together?**

**Michael:** It's usually English. However, when we fight, she switches to Japanese and so it drags on twice as long. She says her rant in Japanese and then gives the English version.

**Mikiko:** When I'm mad, it just comes out. I've got to say "kono @&\$#!!" and then I say it again in English. I know I've got to get myself understood. I learned English while on exchange in America, and then I've had jobs where I used a lot of English. He's also worked so hard to learn Japanese.

**Q: Do you have any advice for those who may marry outside of their culture?**

**Michael:** It's just like any other marriage. Sometimes you have to compromise, like "yes, whatever." My mother always said, "it's not half and half; you give your all, and get half back." It's also important to be able to do your own thing. She really likes Korean dramas, but I don't. 20 years ago, we would be fighting over the remote, but now it's fine because we each have our own screen/tablet.

**Mikiko:** Yeah, you really can't assume your partner thinks the same. It's about acceptance. Now it's completely different from when we grew up; more tolerant. You have to understand that my 'normal' is not my partner's 'normal.'

**Q: Looking back at your relationship, frankly, how is it?**

**Michael:** It's not bad! I am very lucky. Talking with her with fun, and I love being with her. She looks the same as the day I met her. My room always looks like an earthquake hit it, with stuff everywhere, and when I'm working, you can't see the table. She is always well put together. I'm so grateful to have been with her for the past 30 years. I don't know if I would have made it this long if I'd never met her. Truly grateful.

**Mikiko:** hmmm, this is all I know, haha He's got a strong personality, so I think I might be doing good? There may be really strict husbands out there, but he's not like that. I'm so thankful he's always said; "go right ahead, do as you like." Letting me live my life, so I too can say "go right ahead, do as you like."

**Michael:** It's been a good 30 years. I've lived half of my life here in Aizu. We swim in Inawashiro in the summer, and bike to Kitakata, Ashinomaki, and the old road to Inawashiro in spring and autumn. In winter, the family all ski together. Mikiko has pretty much skied since we moved to Aizu, though I learned to snowboard with our daughters. Aizu's sake, and cotton, Sazaedo Temple etc. along with the beautiful nature, products and history; Aizu has it all. This is the best place in the world, but I plan on doing some traveling overseas once I retire.

**Mikiko:** I plan on doing some downsizing while we are still here. "Will you travel with him?" Of course. That was never even a question.