

Events in January

1	MO	Closed (New Year's)
2	TU	Closed (New Year's)
3	WE	Closed (New Year's)
4	TH	
5	FR	
6	SA	15:00 Children's Nihongo Hiroba
7	SU	Closed
8	MO	Closed (Coming of Age Day)
9	TU	
10	WE	12:00 Tokaichi Market
11	TH	
12	FR	
13	SA	10:00 AtsuHana: Japanese Convo. Club 10:00 JICA Desk
14	SU	Closed
15	MO	Closed
16	TU	
17	WE	
18	TH	
19	FR	
20	SA	10:00 FIND: English Conversation Club 15:00 Children's Nihongo Hiroba
21	SU	11:30 New Year's Potluck Party
22	MO	Closed
23	TU	
24	WE	
25	TH	
26	FR	
27	SA	13:30 Newsletter Preparation
28	SU	Closed
29	MO	Closed
30	TU	
31	WE	

Mini Member Spotlight

Zhao Peng

Zhao Peng is a Chinese student at the University of Aizu and he has been an active member since he came to Aizu in the spring. He was one of the presenters at AWIA's Nihongo-de-Hanasou on November 25th. He has been working hard to study Japanese, and knows English very well! He has written a little about himself and his experiences in Fukushima:



My communication with friends in Fukushima started when I was still a student in China. My Japanese tutor, Hirai Riko, is a college student born in Aizu. Being taught patiently about pronunciation and grammar, I started to gradually gain confidence in Japanese. Then, I started my master's program at the University of Aizu in April 2023 and after joining the Japanese lessons at the International Association, I felt my Japanese improve even more.

I continuously pursued any possible new experiences after I started my life in Japan. This November, I participated in a joint activity with the high school students of Futaba Future School. I, together with my group members, visited many places in the Hamadori area in Fukushima, and discussed and presented on our unique ideas. After I was back in Aizu, I made another presentation the very next day at the City Learning Center, in the "Nihongo-de-hanasou" activity!

In my opinion, communication is not as simple as speaking one or more languages. I could feel the willingness of other attendees to understand each other from our eye contact when we were making our presentation. Communication is a chance for me to share my opinions, understand other people's words, and further change myself based on the sympathy generated in my heart. I would like to participate in such activities next year continuously with AWIA to talk with various people all over the world.

'This is Fukushima' Calendar

Stop by and pick up a free copy!

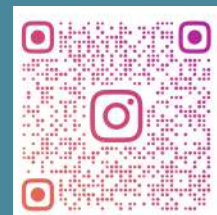
In order to help show off to the world what Fukushima is really like after the 2011 Tohoku Earthquake, some residents have been making a calendar to show off the beauty of this prefecture. Enjoy it all year round with this beautiful calendar!

Call for Newsletter Volunteers!

Come help us fold, stamp, and pack our monthly publications for mailing! No need to sign up, just drop by if you can!

Date: January 27th, Saturday **Time:** 13:30~

Place: Aizu Wakamatsu 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 updates in multiple languages!



Use this QR Code and access our email form to sign-up for events

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: <https://www.awia.jp>

AIZU WAKAMATSU INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION MONTHLY ENGLISH NEWSLETTER

SynthesAizu

January 2024
Volume 4 Issue 1

Association News



Happy New Year! We were able to try many new things in 2023 and we would like to express our appreciation for all of your support. Thank you so much for coming to and volunteering for our events, and we hope to see more of you in 2024!

AWIA Office Holiday Closures: Dec 29th, 30th, 31st, Jan 1st, 2nd, 3rd. Normal hours from Jan 4th (Thu) (9:00-17:45)

Tokaichi New Year's Market

The Tokaichi Market is a annual first market of the new year. People head over to Shinmei Street and buy their good luck items for the year, like *daruma* and *okigari-koboshi*.

We'll have a table at the market this year! We'll be selling original pin-buttons and tea and coffee from around the world. Come by to say hello! Volunteers welcome, so if you have time, come help us out! (Even a short time is welcome.)

Date: Jan 10th (Wed) 12:00~19:00

Place: In front of the AWIA Building

Volunteer Sign-up:

Contact AWIA by Jan 9th (Tue) to sign up
(Feel free to stop by anytime and visit!)



AtsuHana

AtsuHana, Japanese Conversation Club.

Happy New Year! Join us in welcoming the New Year with some fun activities and free talk!

Come have fun and talk to others in Japanese!

When	Saturday, January 13th 10:00-11:30
Place	Aizu City Learning Centre (Keikodo) 3F Rm 1
Sign Up	Contact mail@awia.jp by Friday Jan 12th



New Year's Potluck!

The annual New Year's Potluck is back! We'll have some fun activities, so bring a dish to share (enough for 2-3 people) and have a good time talking with other members! (Feel free to be eco and bring your own utensils etc.)

• **Date:** Jan 21st (Sun) 11:30-13:30

• **Place:** AWIA Office

• **Cost:** Members: ¥100

Non-members: ¥200

(Children under 14: Free)

• **Limit:** 50 people

• **Sign-up:** Contact AWIA: (mail@awia.jp) by Jan 20
(AWIA will provide some soft-drinks, so feel free to bring whatever dish you like!)



FIND English Convo. Club

Why not speak English with people from all walks of life and maybe make some new friends? Everyone is welcome, no matter your English level.

When	Saturday, January 20th 10:00~11:30
Place	Aizu City Learning Centre (Keikodo) 3F Rm 1
Sign Up	Contact mail@awia.jp by Friday Jan 19th



*Due to the nature of **FIND** and **AtsuHana**, we ask that participants wear masks. Thank you for your understanding.*



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

Yanaizu's New Year's Festival

Ring in the New Year at the Temple from the Akabeko legend. The Yanaizu *Nanokado Hadakamairi* happens every year on Jan. 7th at the Enzoji Temple.

It is said there is a Dragon-god who lives in the Tadami river. By showing off their strength and muscles, men prevent it from plaguing Yanaizu once again. Watch them participate in this old tradition of warding off bad luck and illness by climbing up the Temple bell rope wearing only a loincloth!



Where:	Yanaizu's Enzoji Temple (Jikemachiko-176 Yanaizu)
When:	Jan 7th (Sat) - 20:30 (climbing starts)
Access:	Free Bus: 18:00 - Departs Wakamatsu Station 22:00 - Departs Yanaizu Tourist Centre 55 spots - No reservations (First come, first served.)

More Info: <https://aizu-yanaizu.com/information/information-2081/>



Bange Barrel Tug-o'-War

Jan 14th (Sun) ~13:30

A Tug-o'-War with a huge rice bale will decide the fate of the year. It is believed that: if the Eastern team wins, the price of rice will increase. If the Western team wins, there will be a great harvest. Regardless of the outcome, they say anyone who participates will be blessed with health for a whole year, so people come from all around to join! There are also food stalls, taiko performances and more!



Place: AizuBange City Hall (Aizubange, Ichinaka-3banko 3662)

More Info: <https://www.town.aizubange.fukushima.jp/soshiki/29/7253.html>

Higashiyama Onsen 'Sai no Kami'

Jan 14th (Sun) ~18:00

Bring in the new year at the Higashiyama Onsen *Sai-no-Kami*. More commonly known as *Dondo-Yaki*, *Sai-no-Kami* are new year's festivals with bonfires of bamboo, wood, and old good luck talismans. People pray for good harvest, luck and health over the flames. It's said if you feel the warmth from the flames, you'll be healthy all year. If you roast some mochi rice cakes, or dried squid, then take them home with you, they'll bring health and safety to your family. Why not go and experience this traditional event?



Place: Innai-418 Higashiyamamachi (in the Higashiyama area)

More Info: <https://www.aizukanko.com/event/78>

Bank Disruption

NO: Toho Bank ATMs, Convenience Store ATMs, Digital Wallet Account Access Debit Cards, Online Banking, Banking Apps.

TOHO Bank will be undergoing a system upgrade over the new year, so most services will be unavailable over the holiday.

Many banks have service disruptions over the holiday, so don't get caught without any access to your money! Do your banking early!



12/29 (Fri)	12/30 (Sat)	12/31 (Sun)	1/1 (Mon)	1/2 (Tue)	1/3 (Wed)	1/4 (Thu)
△	×	×	×	×	×	△

Aizu COVID-19 Vaccine/Booster Updates

While the situation has calmed down, it is still important to protect yourself against infection.

Free vaccines/boosters will be available until **March 31st 2024**.

Boosters for Omicron XBB variant are available from Pfizer and Daiichi Sankyo. Reservations can be made by telephone at local clinics. Please check the City homepage for availability and more information.



Aizu-Wakamatsu City Homepage:

<https://www.city.aizuwakamatsu.fukushima.jp/>

(Online + Call Centre Reservation Services will no longer be available from January 9th.)

(Vaccines are not mandatory.)



AWIA Spotlight

New AWIA President

AWIA has a new President! Mr. Saze is also the President of the Aizu EU Association and as you saw in last month's newsletter, he was voted by the Board of Directors to become the new President of AWIA. Here is a message from him:

SAZE
Masayuki



Greetings! My name is SAZE Masayuki, and I have been chosen as the next President of the Aizu-Wakamatsu International Association by the Board of Directors after MIYAZAWA Yoichi. Despite my wife having studied abroad, and my own experience of international exchange from when I was a student, I can't speak anything but Japanese. Even so, I have been given the mantle of President of AWIA and I shall endeavor to have fun in this important role. The International Association plays an invaluable role in the community, and I have nothing but respect for the strides it has taken in the last 27 years with its' achievements from an international exchange perspective.

After more than 3 years of the COVID-19 pandemic, and it being downgraded to a common infection, I can really feel the world start up again. Even in Aizu, there are more people here than before, with an increase in international students as well as tourists. I imagine with this, the International Association will be more and more important. There are around 1000 people living, working and studying here and just like us, they have

their own hometowns. Though our culture, customs, and words may be different, isn't being understanding of each other the most important thing? I would be overjoyed if when they return to their countries, they consider Aizu-Wakamatsu as their second hometown as that is proof we have forged a deep connection.

As you well know, the International Association's goal is 'to provide international activities that take advantage of the history, traditions, and culture of Aizu-Wakamatsu City, as well as to contribute to a more multicultural society, to deepen mutual understanding between peoples of different countries, and to assist people from different countries in living a safe and comfortable life in our region.' As society continues to move forward, I hope we can remember our roots and continue to work hard to achieve our goals.

In conclusion, I would like to end my greeting with the hopes that world returns to peace, and that all people can live freely once again. Thank you.

SAZE Masayuki

New CIR: 劉娟 Liu Ken

Let's welcome the new Chinese CIR: Liu Ken! She is looking forward to meeting everyone. Liu-san speaks Japanese and English, so she wrote a message to introduce herself and to say hello!



Hello!! I'm Liu Ken, I'm from Hunan province of China, this year I will work as an Coordinator for International Relations in Aizu-Wakamatsu. I was really addicted to Japan's animation when I was a high school student, and that's why I chose to major in Japanese in college. After I graduated, I worked as an interpreter in a Japanese company for about 4 years. Through the working experience there, I was really affected by



Japanese people's spirit of seriousness, modesty and politeness. I became much more interested in Japan, and as I was eager to know more about it, I started to want to live in Japan.

Eventually, last summer, our whole family (husband, two boys, two cats) moved here, to Aizu-Wakamatsu, a historical city with beautiful natural scenery. I fell in love with this city at first sight.

When I saw the blue sky and clouds, the Iide Renpo Mountain covered with snow, I thought 'it's just like I am in a beautiful picture,' and all the anxieties and fears kept in my heart after 3-years of the pandemic, were released at that moment. I felt so peaceful and relaxed. Then I tasted the delicious rice, soba, seasonal fruits, and experienced the local traditional customs and culture. In addition to that, Aizu is a comfortable place for raising children. Everything here makes me feel so nice. So, I really hope to convey this charm of Aizu-Wakamatsu to more Chinese people, and to share Chinese traditional culture and customs to people here.

I am looking forward to meeting and communicating with you!

