

SynthesAizu

March 2025
Volume 5 Issue 3

Association News

'Little Trip' Series Paraguay

Take a 'Little Trip' to Paraguay and learn about the culture! The hosts, IWAMOTO-san and other students, spent about 6 months doing outreach in Paraguay and are excited to share their experiences. They'll introduce traditional arts, and foods from Paraguay!



Host: IWAMOTO Hinako and others. (Students at Yokohama National University: College of Urban Sciences)

Date: March 8th - 14:00-15:30

Place: Aizu Keikodo Rm 1

Limit: 30 people **Cost:** Free!

Sign-Up: contact AWIA (mail@awia.jp)
Before Mar 7th (Fri)



AtsuHana Japanese Convo. Club.

Speak Japanese in a casual way with many people and have fun with Japanese culture.

When	Saturday, March 8th 10:00-11:30
Place	City Learning Centre (Keikodo) 3F Rm 1
Sign-up	Contact mail@awia.jp by Friday, March 7th

FIND English Convo. Club

KONNO Ayaka founded FIND in Oct 2021 when she was just a high school student. She will be moving on to bigger things from April, so this will be the last FIND with us.

Here is a message from her:



Through meeting the kind people at FIND, which I started with the desire to 'use English in real life', I came to want to 'connect people to people' more than just the English language.

Time flies, and three years have already passed. I feel happy I was able to continue, but at the same time, I feel a little sad. Through running FIND, I learned not simply about the event, but so much about life. Thank you so much to everyone who supported me. Meeting you all has been a treasure for me. FIND will come to an end, but I am sure that the Association will continue to run an English Convo. Circle in the future. Farewell, and let's meet again! See you soon!

We are looking for a new name for our English Convo. Circle. Let us know if you have a suggestion!

When	Saturday, March 15th 10:00~11:30
Place	City Learning Centre (Keikodo) 3F Rm 1
Sign Up	Contact mail@awia.jp by Friday, Mar 14th

Spring Japanese Classes

Give your Japanese skills a boost!

The Spring session of Japanese language courses is here! With our experienced volunteer teachers, we offer courses from beginner to advanced. Our classes strike a balance between reading, writing, and conversational skills. Class sizes are small, may even have 1 on 1 lessons! Online lessons are also available on request.

Deadline to sign-up: March 26th (Wed)

Day	Friday Morning (12 classes)	Thursday Evening (12 classes)
Time	10:00-11:30	18:30-20:00
Course Duration	Apr 4 - June 20	Apr 3 - June 19
Fee (for all 12 classes)	AWIA members ¥4,000 Non-members ¥6,000	
Place	Aizu City Learning Centre	
Apply	Contact AWIA at mail@awia.jp	



会津若松市国際交流協会

TEL (0242) 27-3703

EMAIL: mail@awia.jp

AIZU WAKAMATSU INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION

★ Retirement Special! ★

Kobayashi-san will be retiring at the end of March. We will miss him, and we hope he can enjoy his well earned time off.
(Maybe he can finally focus on basketball practice!)

Message from Kobayashi

I have worked here for the past 25 years while being supported by our members' kind effort and warm smiles.

You don't need a reason or excuse; stop by the International Association at any time! Even just to eat lunch, or while on your way to something. I would love nothing more than if you were able to feel free to go to the Association anytime. I hope that the Association can become a place where you can say 'I'm home!' I know I'll be stopping by from time to time, so I hope to see you there! Truly, thank you so much from the bottom of my heart.



★ ★ ★ ★ ★ Journey at AWIA ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Volunteering



July 1997: Fooling around in the Office



June 1998: Language Volunteer Training: Mt. Iimoriyama

Early Years: Working Hard!



2000 with CIR James



2002 in the Original Office

Did you know: AWIA moved to its current office in Dec 2002!



2004 International Fest.

The International Festival used to be held every year!

More Responsibilities, More Fun!

We have always loved having opportunities for members to have fun!



March 2012: Members' Party



March 2013: TV Interview



March 2016: Bowling

Many Experiences

Did you know: From 2020-2023, staff had partitions on their desks because of COVID-19



Jan 2022: Desk Work



Jan 2025: Potluck

Retirement Messages

Shinji-san,

I can't believe you are retiring. Does that mean we are now getting to be the age of Mr. Suzuki and Mr. Hidano, our first Vice President and Office Manager? The years pass too quickly! I have such fond memories of working with you at AWIA. There were so many good discussions, and lots of laughter. And of course lots of hard work, too. It is said that you can be happy if you do work that is meaningful, and I think working at AWIA directly contributes to the world being a better place. Your legacy in this world is secure!

- Shaney Crawford
(CIR 1997-2000)



↑ Kobayashi + Shaney in 2000

Shinji-senpai! A very hearty congratulations on your retirement. Hoping that you will take a lot of time to travel; and come visit us in Kyoto. Make the most of your new freedom!
- James Kent (CIR 2000-2003)

Whaaaaaat?! He's going to be gone? I'd like to say "no!", but I guess if you think about it, it is along about that time. To Mr. Kobayashi: here's sending you well-wishes on the occasion of your retirement. Even though you'll be retired, please continue to participate in association activities.
- Gueyser Brian (CIR 2008-2011)

Kobayashi-San,

You welcomed me to Aizu warmly at a difficult time. The earthquake brought many changes, but you continued the AWIA's important mission to support the foreign residents of Aizu.

Congratulations on your retirement! -Andrew Chapman(2011-2014)



Staff Spotlight:

KOBAYASHI Shinji



Starting off as a Coordinator for International Relations, and then becoming the Office Head of the AizuWakamatsu International Association, KOBAYASHI Shinji has been a constant presence since 1999. Over his 25-year tenure, he has had the opportunity to meet many people, and has had a positive effect on our community thanks to his smile and kindness.

On Feb 8th, he held a special event 'Chit-Chat with Kobayashi!' and talked about his time at AWIA! We've compiled what he talked about, and added a few extra details.



Learn About The World, Learn About Yourself



Two Postcards that Changed My Destiny.

I was never good at English in school, nor interested in anything overseas but when I was in my 20s, I received two postcards that changed my life. One was an info-session for overseas travel. With that, I went to Australia, and I met an older man that had a huge impact on my life. Thanks to him, I fell in love with Australia. He also taught me what it really meant to communicate with other people. At that time, I didn't have the ability to fully express my gratitude to him, which made me realise I wanted to study more English.



1986 in Australia
(this is not the old man)

The other was a book survey postcard. I was still interested in Australia, so I bought a book about Working-Holidays experiences. Inside was a survey postcard. I was almost too old for the program, and I replied to their postcard telling them exactly that. They responded and encouraged me to apply anyway. With that, I returned to Australia for a year and a half. I travelled, studied English, and worked at a few places, including a duty-free shop, selling high-end watches to travellers. I had a blast.

I can thank that old man I met on my first trip for my life-long love of International Exchange.

The Next Step: 'International Exchange' and AWIA

Going overseas opened my world. It was the first time I'd had the opportunity to learn English from English Speakers, and I met so many great people, and had so many great experiences. In the end, I felt I had to return to Aizu to be with my family, but I still wanted to be connected to the world.

In 1996, when I heard the International Association was opening in Wakamatsu, I was immediately interested. At first, I was very active as a volunteer. I was a Language Volunteer, I helped at the International Festivals, and I was a regular at the Newsletter Preparation day. A few years later, I was lucky to get a position (not as the Gardener,) but as a Coordinator for International Relations. (I actually applied a few times, and like an okiagarikoboshi, I never gave up!) I ended up working alongside SUZUKI Kensuke, OGUMA Noriko, and Shaney CRAWFORD.



1999 Music Cocktail:
(International Fest.)
His first big event!

25 Years: AWIA Connects the World

When people think of 'International Exchange,' they often think of things like travelling and speaking foreign languages, but I've found that 'International Exchange' can be anything. As long as there are two different people, you will experience some 'exchange.' Different generations, different hobbies, parent and child, teacher and student, and even among friends, everyone has different perspectives.

Everyone who comes through AWIA are from different places, and we are the thing that connects them. What we do often does not have a physical impact on the world, but we can see the results years down the line. Our Japanese classes, events, homestay, JICA etc. all impact people's lives.

It has always been important for me to try to greet people in their native languages, tell them 'safe travels' when they leave and 'welcome back' when they return.

These small things have a positive effect and make me feel what I've done at AWIA has meaning. But to tell you the truth, I'm still learning. Maybe this journey of discovery IS answer. Maybe I will know for sure one day.



2003: FM Ai'S Radio Show

A Place For Everyone!

I want the AWIA office to be a place where anyone can stop by without having to worry about a reason. When I was a member, I would think of excuses like 'I'll go ask Shaney a question about English.' But I don't want anyone to worry about that. Even if you're not interested in going overseas or languages, I want people to know that if they go to the Association, they might 'connect' to something new.



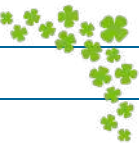
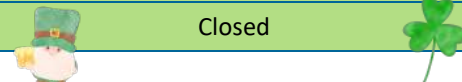

An old staff once told me that it's important to have someone to be there to listen; foreign residents sometimes just need a listening ear to feel supported. I want AWIA to be that place. We should lower the barriers so people can freely enjoy International Exchange.

Through working at the International Association, I've felt the world come closer. Learning about other cultures made me reflect about my self, my family, and I learned more about Aizu and Japan. With this job, you really learn to see people for who they are, not where they are from.



Feb 2025 Chit-Chat

Events in March

1	SA	15:00 Kodomo Nihongo Hiroba
2	SU	Closed
3	MO	Closed 
4	TU	
5	WE	
6	TH	
7	FR	
8	SA	10:00 AtsuHana: Japanese Convo. Club 14:00 Little Trip Series: Paraguay
9	SU	Closed
10	MO	Closed
11	TU	
12	WE	
13	TH	
14	FR	
15	SA	10:00 JICA Desk 10:00 FIND: English Convo. Club LAST 15:00 Kodomo Nihongo Hiroba
16	SU	Closed
17	MO	Closed 
18	TU	
19	WE	15:00 Board Members Meeting
20	TH	Closed (Spring Equinox) 
21	FR	
22	SA	
23	SU	Closed
24	MO	Closed
25	TU	
26	WE	
27	TH	
28	FR	
29	SA	13:30 Newsletter Preparation
30	SU	Closed
31	MO	Closed

Events in Aizu



Aizu Higan-Jishi

March 20 (Thu)

Time: from 10:30 (at Tsuruga-jo Castle)

Place: Various locations around the City throughout the day

Highlights: This traditional ceremony and dance welcomes Spring after the long Aizu winter. Three dancers dress up in traditional costumes of guardian lions, and dance while playing a flute or taiko drum. This is a tradition of Aizu, so I recommend seeing it at least once!



More Details:

<https://www.aizukanko.com/kk/festival/higanjishi>

3.11 Memorial: Hope for Recovery

March 9 (Sun) 14:00-18:30

Place: Open Space in front of the Fukushima Prefectural Museum (Jotomachi 1-25)

Highlights: Remember the 3.11 Great East Japan Earthquake and learn about making preparations for any future natural disasters.



Program:

14:00 - Working Trucks and Disaster Prep Workshop
14:30 - Balloon Performance (fun for children and adults!)
15:00 - Pork soup from the Japan Defense Force (up to 400)
16:30 - Balloon Performance
17:30 - Candle Night lighting ceremony
18:00 - Memorial Fireworks



Hosted by: Fukushima Pref. Aizu Development Bureau

Info about similar events around Fukushima:

<https://www.pref.fukushima.lg.jp/site/portal/kikaku-311-2025.html>

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: March 29th, 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



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