

SynthesAizu

August 2024
Volume 4 Issue 8

Association News

Parents' Salon Tea Ceremony

Join with your family and meet other people raising children in Aizu. You'll get an chance to talk with other parents at different stages of child rearing and experience tea ceremony with your child nearby! Enjoy tea and a snack!



Date: August 31st (Sat) 10:00-11:30

Place: Miyazaki Sado School (Higashi sakaemachi 1-49)

Participants: Parents/Guardians and children, any age!

Cost: ¥500 (¥800 for Non-members)

(Children FREE (18 and up count as adults))

Limit: 10 families

Sign-up: By August 23rd (Fri) - by QR code



Aizu Matsuri Multilingual Desk Training Session

Every year in September, the International Association runs a Multilingual Information Desk on the Tsuruga-jo Castle grounds on the main day of the Aizu Matsuri. Among other things, we provide FREE English tours all day. Want to help? Join us for the training session to learn or brush up on facts about Tsuruga-jo Castle.

Date: Aug 24th (Sat) 10:00~11:30

Meet: Tsuruga-jo Castle Info Desk **Cost:** FREE

Sign-up: By Aug 23rd (Fri) - mail@awia.com

Autumn Japanese Classes

Give your Japanese skills a boost!

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

Deadline to sign-up: August 28th (Wed)

Day	Friday Morning (12 classes)	Thursday Evening (12 classes)
Time	10:00-11:30	18:30-20:00
Course Duration	Sep 6-Nov 22	Sep 5-Nov 21
Fee (for all 12 classes)	AWIA members ¥4,000 Non-members ¥6,000	
Place	Aizu City Learning Centre (Keikodo)	
Apply	Contact AWIA at mail@awia.jp	

2024 International Festival

Oct 5 (Sat)

10:00-15:00

Tsuruga-jo Castle Gym

This year's theme is....

The World Adventure
~into the future beyond!~

Looking for Stage Performances: Have a talent you want to show off? Singing, dancing, music, anything welcome! Performance slots up to ~20mins available! Contact us for more information (mail@awia.jp)

Looking for Volunteers! Join us on October 5th (Sat) for the main event, but we need help beforehand! Stop by and help when you can!

★**Event Pre-Prep:** Planning, flier send out, poster hanging, making decorations etc. (Contact us for details, dates/times)

★**Day Before:** Oct 4th (Fri) 13:00-19:00

Equipment purchase, Venue Set-up, Hanging Decorations, Booth Set-up etc.

★**Event Day:** Oct 5th (Sat) 8:00-16:30

Venue Prep, Helping with Booths, Info desk, clean up, etc.

Still Accepting Booth/Food Stall Applications:

Apply by **Aug 9 (Fri)** Contact us: 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

This Month in Aizu

Hinoemata Mid-Summer Snow Festival

8/3 10:00-16:00 + 8/4 10:00-15:00

(Food stalls + slide close at 16:00/15:00)

(Fireworks: 8/3 - 20:00)

Missing the snow, or just looking to cool way down? Hinoemata is a tiny village tucked in the south-west corner of Fukushima, and it gets some of the deepest snow in the prefecture. So much that they can make it last all year! Why not go play in the snow on a mid-summer's day? Enjoy the small village, go sledding and watch the fireworks display.

Hinoemata is also known for it's Kabuki, so why not check out the museum?

Place: Oze Hinoemata Onsen Ski Resort

More info:

<https://www.oze-info.jp/news/yukimatsuri2024/>



Yanaizu Fireworks

8/10 (Sat) 19:00-21:30

It's summer, and it's time for fireworks! The Yanaizu Fireworks Matsuri happens every year on August 10th! Head out for a beautiful display right near Enzōji Temple and see it lit from the fireworks above and reflected in the Tadami River!

Place: Yanaizu, Tadami Riverside (MichinoEki)

Access: Shuttle bus (Reservation Required)

Aizu Tadami Line Train

More info: <https://hanabi.aizu-yanaizu.com/>

Shuttle Bus: https://www.aizubus.com/sightseeing/bus/mitama_fireworks

www.aizubus.com/sightseeing/bus/mitama_fireworks



Fukushima Prefectural Museum Bon-Odori

8/15 (Thu) 19:00

Free! No sign-up necessary!

Flex your dancing skills at the Fukushima Museum! You can borrow a happi (festival coat) for free!

Dance Practice: 18:30~

(Japanese instructions only)

Bon-odori Start: 19:00

Place: Entrance courtyard of the Fukushima Prefectural Museum (Jotomachi 1-25)



Children get cotton candy for free! There may be other food and drink stalls to enjoy as well. Come dance at the museum!!

Kitakata Sunflower Festa

8/7 - 8/25 10:00-15:00

Come see a HUGE field of beautifully flowering Sunflowers in Kitakata. The flowers were planted on a ski hill, so you get a wonderful view. You can enjoy different things there throughout the month!



- ♦ **Aug 10/11+24/25(Sat+Sun)** Make a 'stained glass' fan!
- ♦ **Aug 17 (Sat)** - Walk Rally - walk through the fields, collect stamps, answer quizzes!
- ♦ **Aug 18 (Sun)** - Sunflower Concert!
- ♦ **Aug 24/25(Sat+Sun)** - Sunflower Cut: Bring a pair of scissors and take home sunflower heads from designated areas



Access:

Car: 50mins from Aizuwakamatsu IC

Train: 40mins by taxi from Kitakata Station



For flier and more information:

<https://www.city.kitakata.fukushima.jp/soshiki/sanqyo-a/50222.html>

7th Aizuwakamatsu ONSEN Gastronomy Walking Tour

9/28 (Sat) Sign-ups open now!

Do you like onsen, local food, and sake? Well look no further—this tour is perfect for you! Walk around the Ashinomaki Onsen area and take in the natural scenery at the Okawa Dam and the Aga river, and enjoy some local cuisine and award winning sake. There are staggered start times, so choose the best time for you!



Route: 8 stops between Okawa Dam West Park -> Ashinomaki Onsen (~8km)
For more details and to sign-up, see the Gastronomy Tourism event page (Japanese only).

Sign-up: Scan the QR Code to sign up

Contact: Aizuwakamatsu Tourism Division



Tsuruga-jo Castle Sword Fight

9/7 (Sat) • 9/21 (Sat)

An event for everyone, children and adults alike! Use soft swords knock off a ball attached to your opponent's arm and feel like you're a part of one of Aizu's Historic Lord's armies!

First Battle: 10:00-noon • Second Battle: 13:30-15:00

Place: Tsuruga-jo Castle Grounds

Participants: aged 5 and up

Limit: 150 people/'battle'

How to Sign-up: Sign-up Online

<https://www.city.aizuwakamatsu.fukushima.jp/docs/2024062000042/>

Deadline: One week beforehand (or until full)

Contact: Tourism Bureau (0242-39-1251)



LGBTQIA+

L-Lesbian, G-Gay, B-Bisexual, T-Transgender, Q-Queer, I-intersex, A-asexual, +-for any and all other identities. This is an acronym that encompasses people with differing sexual and gender identities. It is an ever-evolving term and different versions are used by different people.

June was Pride Month, so we interviewed a member of our community about their experience as a gay man living in Aizu. We are keeping this article anonymous, but we hope that it gives you a different perspective on the world.

Being open to and learning about different cultures, the lives of others, and their experiences is also Cultural and International Exchange!



Love is Love! Acceptance is for Everyone!



1. How is life in Aizu? (From an LGBTQIA+ perspective)

Life in Aizu is comfortable and I feel safe. However, as a gay person, it gets lonely sometimes because there isn't a solid community of LGBTQIA members in Aizu. Being a gay person in Aizu can be a little challenging. Most people are kind but some do not know what "gay" is and therefore act weird once they find out that I am gay. When I meet new people with my boyfriend, they immediately refer to us as "best friends" and we do not correct them. They could be homophobic or ignorant and it could put us in an unsafe situation, therefore we agree. In public, we are just "friends," but in the comfort of our apartment, we are a "couple" that has been together for 4 years and plans to wed soon. At times, it can feel oppressing because I know that gay people in Japan do not have the same rights as straight people. We live in a country where gay people cannot get married or adopt children, and it makes me sad for gay Japanese people. Luckily, I can return to my home country and marry, but not everyone has that privilege.

2. Do you have any problems or difficulties when you came to Japan? (Especially regarding LGBTQIA+)

Of course, I experienced some culture shock when I first arrived. As a gay man, I found it difficult to accept how little people knew about the LGBTQIA+ community. I also had to get used to people assuming that I had a girlfriend. Back home, I was open and proud. But in Japan, I try to blend in and assimilate to cultural standards.

3. Did you tell anyone around you about your sexuality? If not, was there any reason why you did not?

Of course, I told my family. My mother was supportive and loving, while my father was not. My father and I have not talked about it for over 4 years, and he told me that he would "never accept having a gay son." I did not tell my grandfathers because they are very religious and homophobic. One of my grandfathers passed away last year and he died not knowing that I was gay. It is sad but I think it was the best decision at the time. I believe that "coming out" is a sacred and vulnerable thing, and if telling someone who is not supportive would do more harm than good, then do not tell them. You do not have to come out to anyone, it is your choice who gets to know the real authentic you.

4. Have you ever had any troubles with your sexuality in your life?

Yes! I grew up in a strict Christian household with many family members being leaders in the church. Being gay was

not allowed and I was told at a young age that gay people were going to hell. I remember growing up in the church and listening to homophobic sermons. This caused me to be anxious and depressed and I thought I would die as a closeted man. When COVID hit, I had the time to reflect on my life and who I was, and I felt that it was time for me to come out. I came out slowly, first to my sisters, then my mom, and finally my dad and stepmother. I remember my stepmother told me that I would die from AIDs and my father told me that I would never be happy. These words hurt me at the time, and they still sting a little. But, I know that their ignorance and hatred do not stop me from living my life. I have the support I need from my chosen family and I am proud of who I am.

5. Do you have any dreams for the future?

Yes! I want to travel and enjoy life with my beautiful boyfriend (hopefully husband one day) with our two cats. I want to meet interesting people and make genuine connections. I work with an NGO in Brazil right now focusing on providing food to vulnerable communities through food recovery projects and I want to continue my work with them, and I intend to visit Brazil soon to see this work in action.

6. Is there anything you want Japanese people to understand or realize?




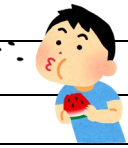
I want people to realize that gay people exist and have been around since the beginning. Being gay or not straight is natural and not a choice. It is a part of someone's identity and should be respected. To any gay Japanese people reading this, I want you to know that coming out is a process, and do not feel pressured to come out if you are not in a safe environment. There is no right way to come out. Come out at your own pace and on your terms. Whenever you do come out, please know that there are people all over the world who understand your journey and love you. If your family is not supportive, make a "chosen family." My chosen family has gotten me through some dark times. Love is love, and there is nothing wrong with you. And to the allies reading this, please know that your love and acceptance can change lives. If you are an ally, be proud of it.

7. Is there anything you would like to tell the people who read the newsletter?

I want people to know that being nice and listening to someone could save a life. Be open-minded. Listen to each other's stories. Always be kind. Also, if you have never been to a PRIDE event, I recommend it. It is a time of love, acceptance, dancing, and happiness.



Events in August

1	TH	
2	FR	
3	SA	10:00 Satellite JICA Desk 15:00 High Schoolers' Discussion 15:00 Children's Nihongo Hiroba
4	SU	Closed
5	MO	Closed
6	TU	
7	WE	
8	TH	
9	FR	
10	SA	
11	SU	Closed - Mountain Day
12	MO	Closed - Mountain Day Transfer Holiday
13	TU	
14	WE	
15	TH	
16	FR	
17	SA	10:00 FIND English Convo. Circle 15:00 Children's Nihongo Hiroba
18	SU	Closed
19	MO	Closed
20	TU	
21	WE	
22	TH	
23	FR	
24	SA	10:00 Aizu Matsuri Multilingual Desk Training 10:00 Satellite JICA Desk 15:00 High Schoolers' Discussion
25	SU	Closed
26	MO	Closed
27	TU	
28	WE	
29	TH	
30	FR	
31	SA	10:00 Parents Salon - Tea Ceremony 13:30 Newsletter Preparation

Association Events

FIND English Convo. Club

Why not come and 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, August 17th 10:00~11:30
Place	City Learning Centre (Keikodo) 3F Rm 1
Sign Up	Contact mail@awia.jp by Friday, August 16th

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

ChAT吧 (ChAT-ba) Chinese Convo. Club.

ChAT-ba stands for:

'Ch': Chinese, 'A': Aizu, 'T': Together, and '吧/-ba': 'Let's!' in Chinese.
Interested in speaking Chinese with other learners, and Chinese people? Join the new Chinese Conversation Circle ChAT-ba!

The next ChAT吧 is **SEPT 12th (Thu)**

13:30-15:00 at the AWIA Office.

Sign-up by email - mail@awia.jp

We held the first ChAT吧 on July 18th (Thu) and around 13 people joined us to chat in Chinese. First, we played a self-introduction game, and checked some vocabulary, then did free talk! There was a great mix of native Chinese speakers and learners! Everyone was smiling and having a great time. The participants had so much fun that many people didn't even take a break!



AtsuHana Japanese Convo. Club.

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

No AtsuHana in August, but come join us in September!
Check the September Newsletter next month for more info!

When	Saturday, September 14th 10:00-11:30
Place	City Learning Centre (Keikodo) 3F Rm 1
Sign Up	Contact mail@awia.jp by Friday, September 13th

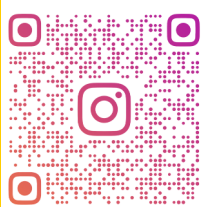
Call for Newsletter Volunteers!

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

Date: Aug 31st, 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 to access our email form to sign-up for events