

What's Happening in Obihiro?

International Relations Section Newsletter

New Year's

Christmas &



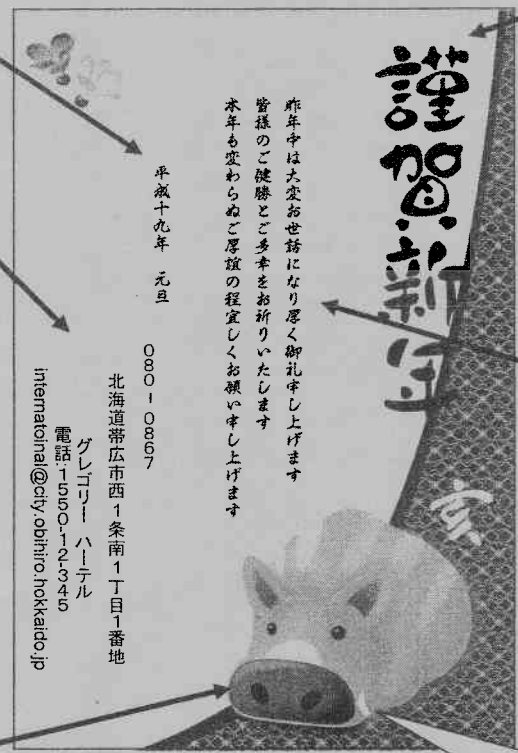
Since the next WHIO won't be coming out until 2007, and the fact that Christmas in Japan is more like Valentine's day, I decided that I should write about New Year's in Japan instead. New Year's is called Oshogatsu, and it is one of the most important holidays in Japan. Japanese people get together with their family and friends and eat special foods. They even send New Year's cards (nengajo) to everyone they know, which makes it sound similar to the way Christmas is celebrated elsewhere... Anyways, last year's WHIO had such a great guide on how to make Nengajo that I decided to re-print it for all the new people here in Obihiro. (myself included of course!)

You should write Nengajo to your coworkers, to your friends, and to the people who have helped you out during the year. You can order them at a printing store or you can buy blank ones at a combini or stationary store and make your own. There is a special Nengajo box at the post office, drop off your cards by December 25th for January 1st delivery (there is a special box for Nengajo)

The date goes here.
Write 平成十九年 元旦
instead of 2007年1月1日.

Your Address and name
go here. (or to the left of
the date) It's up to you if
you want to include your
phone and email.

Writing is boring so be sure
to include an image of
some kind. Usually some
sort of New Years imagery,
or the animal of the zodiac
for the new year. 2007 is
the year of the wild boar!
You could use a photo if
you do them on your
printer. There are also
many rubber stamps you
can use if you'd like.



Some pretty kanji to ring in the new year.
You can write:
謹賀新年 (kingashinnen)
賀正 (gashou) 迎春 (geishun)
あけましておめでとうございます
These all basically mean "Happy New Year."
You can also write it in English, plenty of
Japanese people do. You can also get stamps
that say these things at stationary stores or 100
yen shops.

A little message thanking the recipient for help
during the last year.
昨年は大変お世話になり、ありがとうございました。
(Thank you for all you have done for me this year)
皆様のご健康をお祈り申し上げます。
(I am praying for everyone's good health)
本年もどうぞよろしくお願ひ申し上げます。
(Hope for your continued favor during this next year too)
These are also available in rubber stamp form
(to save tired hands).
You can also write news about yourself and family
or a personal message here.

Nengajo Trivia!

On the other side of the card, write
the address of the person you are sending to, (make
sure to include their postal code; 080-0025 etc) and
drop it at the post office. Hakuna matata baby

- Did you know that ...
- The highest number of New Year's Cards sent through the post office was 4,459,360 cards in 2004
 - This year there have already been nearly 4 million cards recorded and ready to be delivered (and it is still November!)
 - New Year's Cards can come with money value attached to them. Un-used New Year's cards with money-value can be exchanged for stamps or a normal postcard, if you pay a 5 yen fee.
 - If you don't use a money-value added New Year's card because your friend went into mourning due to a death in the family, you don't have to pay the 5 yen fee.
 - The 1st 2nd and 3rd place prizes won in the first New Year's Card lottery were 1) A high quality sewing machine 2) Some Western clothing and 3) a globe for student use! Fun stuff!



Tokachi Events

December 2006



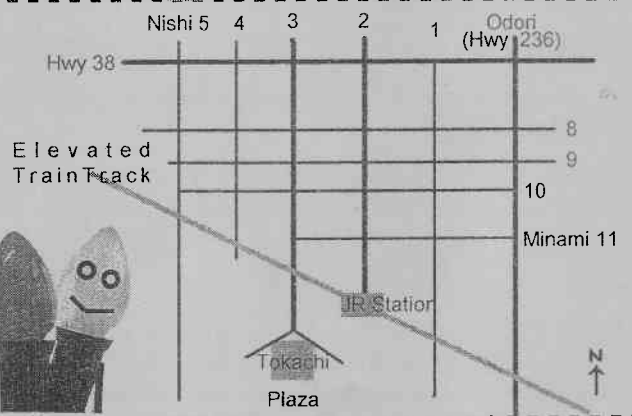
When	What	Where/Contact #
Weekends in December 10:00-16:00 (continues thru March)	Draft Horse Racing: This is probably what Obihiro is most famous for. In these Banei horse races, huge work horses pull sleds loaded with weights. The track is sand, but if it snows, the track disappears and things get interesting. Obihiro does not have a heated/covered racetrack, so it specializes in these winter snow horse races.	帯広競馬場 Obihiro Horse Racetrack 0155-34-0825
12/1 (Fri) 18:30~	Ikeda Nouveau Wine Festival: Once a year the Ikeda Wine castle holds this event to allow people to eat good food and drink good wine. On the website, there is a picture of a woman drinking from a wine glass that is bigger than her head! Tickets are 4000 yen and you must RSVP before the festival.	池田ワイン城 Ikeda Wine Castle 01557-2-2467
12/9 (Sat) 6pm ~	Obihiro Wine Party 2006: This is another big international event here in O-town! Last year about 500 people showed up to enjoy tasting wines from around the world and meeting people from around the world as well. There's going to be lots of attractions such as taiko drumming, a sword dance, and even a janken tournament! Tickets to get in cost 500 yen for high school kids and younger, 1500 yen for college students, and 2500 yen for anyone else. Come make some friends and get rosy-cheeked in the cold December weather!	寿御苑 Kotobuki Gyoen Nishi 7 Minami 6 Call 0155-34-0122 for reservations
12/10 (Sun) 9:00 - 14:00	Hiroh Kaisen Yamasen Manpuku Matsuri: Hiroh (sometimes written Hiroo) is having a festival that is literally titled the "Fill your Stomach with fresh Ocean and Mountain Foods Festival". You can't go wrong with a name like that! There's going to be a crab eating contest and other fun things to do, so come fill your belly!	広尾シーサイドパーク Hiroh Seaside Park 01558-2-0177
12/16 (Sat) 14:00 - 16:00	Brazilian Culture Presentation: Carlos, our CIR from Brazil, will be talking about his homeland. Samba, Brazilian food, Japanese immigration to Brazil in the past. (The presentation will be in Japanese)	森の交流館 Tokachi International Relations Center 0155-34-0122
All December (times vary)	Obihiro Citizen's Culture Hall Events: There will be events on these days: 3rd-Chorus concert and Modern/Traditional Dance Performance, 7th-Enka concert, 15th-Opera, 20th-Family Concert done by the Self Defense Forces Band and on the, 24 th -movie!	帯広市民文化ホール Obihiro Citizen's Culture Hall (next to the Nagasakiya downtown) 0155-23-8111

City of Lights!

Obihiro is going to be lit up from Minami 7 to the Station (Minami 12) and from Odori (Hwy 236) to Nishi 3. I am writing this in November and they are already making preparations all across town for various Christmas light displays. Some places that will be having special displays up are:

- City Hall
- Central Park
- Fujimaru
- The NHK Studio
- Obihiro Library
- Tokachi Plaza

There is going to be an especially large amount of separate displays in front of Obihiro station, so come check them all out!



Obihiro Survival Guide(s)!

Knock, Knock Before the Big Freeze

Recently there has been an increase in the number of incidents where a foreigner gets a knock at their door, and some Japanese person that they don't know tries to get them to buy, stamp, or sign something that they can't understand. This can be a dangerous situation in that many people can not speak Japanese, and even if they (me included) can speak Japanese, they (we) might not understand exactly what is being requested.

So here's the situation. You get a knock at your door. You answer it and there's a Japanese person asking all these questions and trying to get you to hanko or sign a sheet of paper he keeps showing you. If he doesn't speak English well or at all, you may not be able to understand what he's saying, or at least, you won't be able to understand clear enough to be able to sign anything. So, here is my advice to you: If you didn't order anything, and you aren't expecting any kind of package, be wary of anyone who asks for your signature or stamp. Some people who come to your door asking for a signature may be from a legitimate company, however,

DO NOT SIGN OR STAMP ANYTHING IF YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND IT!!!

You should ask your Japanese friends for help first. However, if for some reason your friend can't explain to you what the form is, you can always bring it into city hall and I will translate it for you. I can't help everyone with every single strange piece of paper they receive, but I can help you if it's dire.

Winter is upon us, and there are many things you need to do and be aware of before the coldest days arrive. Obihiro's winter is going to be amazingly cold and long. Last year in December, the minimum temperature was -20 degrees Celsius, and the average low temperature was -11C. In January, it got even colder last year and the lowest temperature was -23C, with an average low of -15C.

In other words, your going to want to get yourself a bunch of blankets and a good heater, if you don't have one already! You will probably want to buy a nice winter jacket and some nagagutsu (長靴). Nagagutsu are tall rubber boots that don't insulate you much against the cold, but will definitely keep your feet high-and-dry throughout the cold wet Obihiro winter.



Buy yourself a snow shovel to excavate your car from its icy tomb every morning. If you live in a house in a crowded neighborhood (which is pretty much anywhere in Obihiro), and there is no where to put the snow you want to shovel, don't worry. Some electronics stores actually sell machines that are specifically designed to melt snow! They look like a big simple metal box on wheels with a black thing inside. The black thing heats up so that when you shovel the snow into the box, it melts; voila!

As an experiment, I will be re-making a section that used to be part of WHIO; the Japanese Corner. This month will be a list of useful words for winter-time and we'll see how you all like it. If you have any suggestions as to what you would like to see written here, or how it should be written, please email GREG at international@city.obihiko.hokkaido.jp

Japanese Corner

冬 (ふゆ) Winter

雪かき (ゆきかき) Snow Shoveling: Many people shovel their own parking spot as a courtesy.

スコップ Snow Shovel/Scoop: Come in all shapes and sizes.

長靴 (ながぐつ) Rubber Boots: Easy on and off, plus water-proof capabilities.

タイヤ交換 (タイヤこうかん) Tire Change: Be sure to change your tires to winter tires soon!

加湿器 (かしたつき) Humidifier: Heaters make the air really dry, so use this as a countermeasure.

元栓 (もとせん) Stopcock: Lever you turn to shut off your water main.

水道凍結 (すいどうとうけつ) Freezing of water pipes. Happens often in Obihiro, so beware.

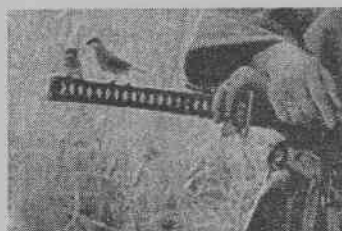


Times are subject to change. To confirm, call or check online at: <http://www.taiyogroup.jp/cinema/index.html>

This December At Cinema Taiyo Obihiro

(Nishi 3, Minami 7) Tel: (0155) 20-1525

Title	Language	Starts - Ends
Letters from Iwo Jima (pictures at right)	Japanese	Dec 9 - Jan
Eragon	English	Dec 9 - Jan
007 Casino Royale	English	Dec 1 - Jan
Open Season	Japanese	Dec 9 - Jan
Bushi no Ichibun (pictures below)	Japanese	Dec 1 - Jan
NANA2	Japanese	Dec 9 - Jan
Oh! Oku	Japanese	Dec 23 - Jan
Inugamike no Ichizoku	Japanese	Dec 16 - Jan



Shyaarotto no Okurimono (Charlotte's Web)	Japanese	Dec 23 - Jan
Bleach	Japanese	Dec 16 - Jan
Rainbow Song (Niji no Megami)	Japanese	Oct 28 - Dec 8
Tsubakiyama Kacho no Nanokakan	Japanese	Nov 18 - Dec 22
The Devil Wears Prada	English	Nov 18 - Dec 22
Children of Men ("Tomorrow World" in Japanese)	English	Nov 18 - Dec 8
Flags of Our Fathers	English	Nov 1 - Dec 8
Christmas like August 24th	Japanese	Nov 3 - Dec 8
Death Note: Sequel	Japanese	Nov 3 - Dec 15

Hokkaido English Challenge!

HEC is a project which was started 14 years ago by foreign English teachers to provide students in Hokkaido with an opportunity to use their English skills in communicative ways and work together on a project with their ALTs.

In order to be able to incorporate students from all over Hokkaido, the test is administered by a student's English teacher in front of a video camera in March. The tapes are screened by two sets of judges and the results are announced in May. The test is entirely based on oral English and communication skills and significantly improves students' confidence in English. Please visit the website to see tests from previous years.

About ¥1,300,000 is spent on prizes every year for successful students and each student has a very good chance at winning in a few different ways. The first place winners will receive a free home-stay in the English-speaking country of the winner's choice. Additionally, over ¥100,000 in trophies and gift certificates are awarded to 2nd and 3rd place winners.

Possibly the best prize of all however, is the HEC English summer camp in July. The top 50 students receive invitations to camp. The students receive food, accommodation, onsen, week-long eikaiwa run by native English-speakers from all over the world, and all activities for free. This is also a great chance for students to meet other students from all over Hokkaido who are enthusiastic about English. The camp is run entirely by foreign English teachers who are living and working in Hokkaido and those that participate claim it as their most memorable experience with students while in Japan.

Whether you are a student, an English teacher, a volunteer, a camp-staff, Japanese or not... all can benefit from joining the Hokkaido English Challenge!

For more information, please visit www.hajet.org/hec.html or contact the HEC Coordinator at theresa.hill@hotmail.com

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What's Happening in Obihiro?

can be found at the following locations: Obihiro City Hall, Tokachi International Relations Center, Obihiro University International Center, Obihiro Tourism and Convention Center inside the Obihiro JR Station, Obihiro Public Library, Joy English Academy and

online at www.city.obihoro.hokkaido.jp

"WHIO?" Is a newsletter published monthly by the Obihiro International Relations Section for residents of the Tokachi District and related parties. The contents of this newsletter do not necessarily represent the official views or opinions of the International Relations Section or the City of Obihiro. Questions? Tel (0155) 24-4111 (ext. 1173) or send e-mail to WHIO Editing Team at international@city.obihoro.hokkaido.jp.