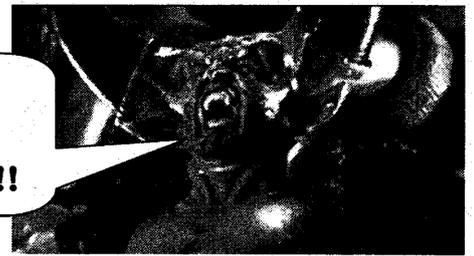


What's Happening in Obihiro?

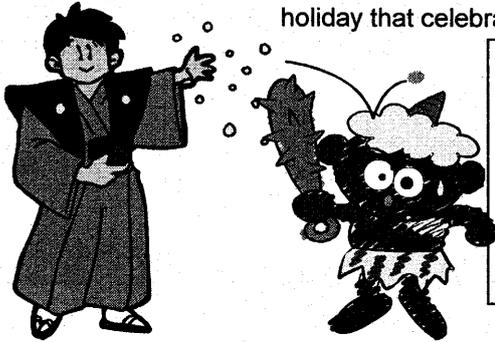
International Relations Section Newsletter

I HATE
BEANS
ARRRRGH!!!

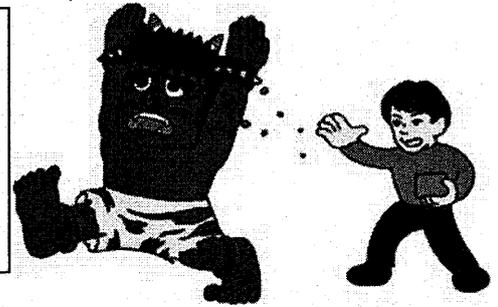


Demons out, Happiness in!

It's an all out war on the demons, and you've already been drafted for service! Grab your bean-shooter and aim at anything that's red and has horns! Setsubun (which is written 節分) literally refers to the changing of the season. It is the holiday that celebrates the beginning of spring, and it is quite a unique event.



Like elsewhere in the world, you have to do your spring cleaning. However, here in Japan, you're not cleaning dirt, you're cleanin' out the demons. And you don't vacuum your house; you throw beans all over the place inside your house!



On February 3rd (or 4th, depending on the year), Japanese people celebrate Setsubun with a Bean Throwing Ceremony or "Mamemaki". They throw beans all around their house shouting "Oni wa soto! Fuku wa uchi!" which means "Out with demons! In with good luck and happiness!". This is an old tradition related to the planting of beans in the spring, but it mixed with other traditions and now it is a ceremony for driving out evil spirits and calling in happiness and good luck into your home. One person might act the part of a demon and run all around the house.

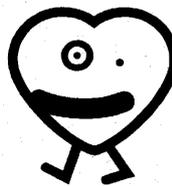


while everyone else in the family throws beans at him or her. Another tradition is to pick up and eat the same number of beans as your age. Seeing as how Japanese people are some of the longest lived people in the world, they're going to be eating a lot of beans this year!

There is another Setsubun tradition that is most commonly practiced by those funny people in Kansai (western Japan). Eating an entire roll of sushi on the night of Setsubun is said to make your dream come true. Yep, that's right; you have to devour the entire thing in the picture at left. You have to eat it correctly though. First, face that year's lucky direction. Then, down the entire roll without saying a word! The sushi roll is said to "roll in" good fortune, and people eat it without cutting it in the hopes that their human relationships with friends, family, and others won't be cut off.



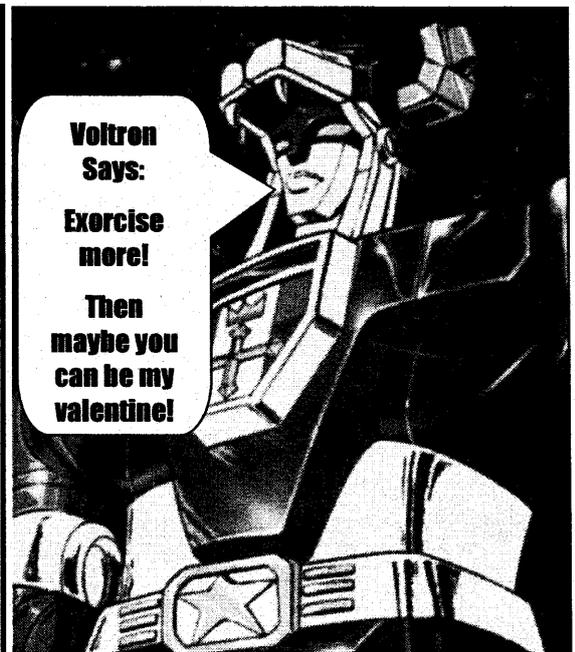
St. Valentine's Day



February 14th is the day to confess your love to the man of your dreams. That's right. All you ladies get in the saddle and buy (or make) some chocolates for the guy (or guys) you've had your eye on!

Men, don't think that you're off the hook either. On March 14th, also known as White Day, you will be expected to give candies or other goodies to any girl who gave you chocolates for valentine's.

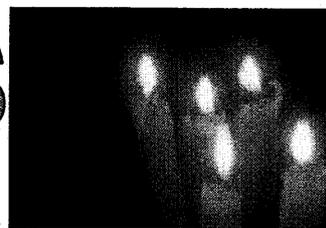
Voltren
Says:
Exercise
more!
Then
maybe you
can be my
valentine!





Tokachi Events

February 2007



When	What	Where/Contact #
Some Ongoing Events (End in March)	Draft Horse Racing: At the Obihiro Horse racetrack. This is the last year so come and see it! Shikaribetsu Lake Kotan: A Bar made completely of ice, outdoor onsen, and igloos too! Tokachi River Hakucho Festival : Pretty lights!	Refer to past WHIO or email us at international@city.obihoro.hokkaido.jp
2/2 - 4 (Fri - Sun) 17:00- 20:00	Ice Candle Night: The details of this year's event have not been decided yet, but here is what happened last year. In addition to lighting candles to make a serene winter display, there was a fireworks for kids to light up the night. There was free pig soup for the first 100 people to show up!	道の駅なかさつない Michi no Eki in Nakasatsunai 0155-67-2321
2/4 (Sun) 9:30 - 12:00	Flea Market: Tokachi Plaza has these on various Sundays every month.	とかちプラザ Tokachi Plaza 0155-36-3430
2/8 - 2/9 (Thu - Fri) 10:00 - 16:00 (open until 18:00 on Thursday)	Brand name watches, bags, footwear, and other goods for sale. What a bargain!	とかちプラザ Tokachi Plaza 090-1663-4445
2/11 - 12 (Sun - Mon) 7:00~	Dream Balloons Tokachi: Hot-air balloons in all shapes and sizes; including Doraemon!	十勝川温泉街の上 The skies above the Tokachigawa onsen area 0155-46-2121
2/14 (Wed) 15:00 - 20:00 (fireworks@19:30)	Ice Light Night Love Fantasy: Memuro is at it again. This year, Memuro park will be filled with the romantic glow of 4000 candles to set the mood. There will be a snow slide and maze as well as hot air balloon rides. The climax will be fireworks launched into the serene night sky. Hot food and drink will be on sale.	旧芽室高校多目的広場 Former Highschool Playground (near Koritsu Memuro Hospital) 0155-62-9726
2/18 (Sun) 9:30~	Nauman All Hokkaido Sledding Tournament: Sledding Speed Attacks, Sledding technique performances, parent and child races, cardboard sledding, human bowling, grab-the-flag-at-the-top-of-the-hill race, and more! Sign up for activities is 8:30 to 9:25AM (Pictures Below!!!!!!)	幕別白銀台 スキー場 Hakugindai Ski Hill in Makubetsu 01558-8-2141

