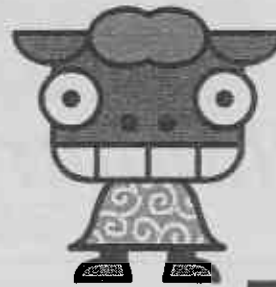


# What's Happening in Obihiro?

International Relations Section Newsletter



# Oshōgatsu

How was your 2006 in Obihiro? We, the International Relations Sections, hope you met many people of Obihiro through international events. Remember? We had Friends of the World, Bon-dance, Halloween, Introduction to Japanese Food and Culture, Wine Party and so on. And of course, many topics and events were introduced in 2006 What's Happening in Obihiro, such as "Atomic Bombings in Japan", "Shichi-go san" or "What to do during a disaster," etc. Well, time flies very fast, and time never stops! Now 2007 is upon us. This month will be about how the New Year is celebrated in Japan.

New Year's Day, called Oshogatsu, is the most important day for Japanese people. Schools and business close during the end and beginning of the year, families get together, clean and decorate their houses, and prepare many foods.

There are three common things that almost all Japanese people do. These are decorations, foods, and Hatsumoude. Last year's WHIO explained the decorations, so this year we will only be explaining the remaining two subjects.



## Osechi

The special food eaten at New Year's is called "Osechi". Osechi is eaten on the first three days of the new year; Jan. 1st to 3rd, and has to be done by Dec. 31st so that women's, especially mother's, housework can be reduced for the first three days of the new year. Each Osechi has meaning. Types of food and their taste differ from family to family, but here are some traditional foods carried on from generations before.

Kuro-mame (Black beans): Represents a wish to work hard and to be healthy for the year. (*Mame* means "to work hard" in Japanese.)

Kazu-no-ko (Herring eggs): Wish to be gifted with children. ("Ko" means child.)

Shrimp: Shrimp symbolizes old people from its stooped shape. So the meaning of the shrimp is longevity.

Kobu-maki (Tangle roll): This came from the word play, linking *Kobu-maki* and *Yorokobu* (which means happiness.)

Kinton (Sweet chestnuts): Kinton is written 金団 in Kanji, meaning "gold clumps". From its Kanji and color, Kinton is considered to be as a lucky charm of wealth and richness.

The flavor of the Osechi is passed down from grand-mother to mother to daughter, and so on. So Osechi is the family's traditional food as well as Japanese traditional food.

But you can buy Osechi at any shop now. Some shops even deliver to your home on January 1st. So why don't you try some!?

## Hatsumoude



Hatsumoude is the first visit to the shrine or temple in a new year to pray for health and happiness. When you pray, you give money offerings. At the shrine, you can draw sacred lots for oracles (Omikuji). Omikuji tells many aspects of life such as academics, business, marriage, proposals, etc for the year that you are going to have. Of course this omikuji is written in Japanese. So here are the most important words to know.

Daikichi(大吉)-excellent, Chu-kichi(中吉)-very good, Sho-kichi(小吉)-good, Kichi(吉)-average, Sue-kichi(末吉)-not bad, Kyou(凶)-bad, Dai-kyou(大凶)-very bad

In some shrines, drink offerings (sacred Sake) or sweet Sake(Amazake) are served. These alcoholic drinks are to get rid of your bad luck and protect you against evil spirits. This sake is also one type of Japanese traditional drink for New Year. But if you drink them, remember, don't drive!



# Tokachi Events

## January 2006



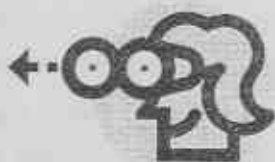
When	What	Where/Contact #
Weekends 10:00-16:00 (continues thru March)	<b>Draft Horse Racing:</b> Obihiro does not have a heated/covered racetrack, so it specializes in these winter horse races. This will be the last time I list this event, though it will continue through March!	帯広競馬場 Obihiro Horse Racetrack 0155-34-0825
1/20-21 (Sat-Sun) 9:00-15:00	<b>Nukabira Lake Time Trials on Ice:</b> That's right. You heard it hear first: Frozen lake + Car race = Good times!	糠平湖 Nukabira Lake 0155-22-5605
1/26-28 (Fri-Sun) 10:00-20:00	<b>Obihiro Ice Festival:</b> There's going to be huge snow sculptures, a big snow slide, ice sculptures, and even a snow maze! This is one of Obihiro's biggest and most famous festivals, and it rivals Sapporo's famous Snow Festival.	帯広緑ヶ丘公園 Green Park in Obihiro 0155-22-8600
1/20-3/31 (Sat-Sat) 19:00 ~	<b>Shikaribetsu Lake Kotan:</b> "Kotan" means village in the language of the Ainu. There is going to be a village built on the frozen Shikaribetsu Lake. There will be an open air onsen (hot bath), an "ice bar" completely constructed of ice, and igloos too!	 然別湖 Shikaribetsu Lake 01556-9-8181
1/27-3/4 (Sun-Sun) 19:00-21:00	<b>Tokachi River Hakucho Festival:</b> This "White Bird" festival is going to have a light and sound fantasy show that will take you to a wonderful whimsical world! There will also be full impact snow rafting, snow hut building and a snow slide!	十勝川温泉アクアパーク、 十勝が丘公園ハナック広場 Tokachi River Aqua Park, Tokachigaoka Park 0155-32-6633
1/27-3/25 (Sun-Sun) At night (after 8pm)	<b>Sounkyo Ice Cascade Festival :</b> Another challenger to Sapporo's festival. Snow and ice sculptures including tunnels and domes join the natural spectacle of a frozen waterfall for this winter extravaganza. Coloured lights and fireworks add to the magic in the evenings.	層雲峡温泉 Sounkyo Onsen, Hokkaido



Obihiro Ice Festival



Tokachi River Hakucho Festival



**Note:** The Sapporo Snow Festival (probably Hokkaido's biggest tourist attraction) will be Feb. 6th - 12th

# Obihiro Survival Guide!

## Getting your kids educated

Some of you reading this may have young children and are soon going to start thinking about sending them to school. In this month's Survival Guide, we're going to tell you exactly how you can get your kid enrolled in a Japanese school. (almost all kindergartens in Tokachi are privately run, so I can not list all of their information here, but I can tell you that in Tokachi, the application period for these private kindergartens is in Autumn. They hand out applications forms at the beginning of October, and start to take applications first thing in November)

Children enter elementary school (shougakkou) in the April following their 6th birthday, and study there for 6 years. After graduating from elementary school, students enter junior high school (chuugakkou) for a further three years. After junior high school, students have completed their compulsory education. Elementary and Junior high school starts in April, make sure to apply in time for the new school year! Tuition is free in public elementary and junior high schools, as well as at the elementary and lower secondary level at schools for the deaf and physically or mentally challenged. However, there may be various other expenses, so be aware.

To enter or transfer to an elementary or Junior high school, you are going to have to do a lot of paperwork.. The parent or guardian (hereafter referred to as the PG) should come into to City Hall (or your local town hall) and let us know that you want to put your kid in school. After doing so, the PG will receive either a "Gaikokujin jidou seito nyuugaku moushikomisho" (School Entrance Application Form for Foreign Children) or a "Shuugaku annai" (Guidance for Entering School Form) so please fill out the necessary information on these forms and turn them in. Some days later, the local municipal board of education will send a "Gaikokujin jidou seito nyuugaku kyokasho" (School Entrance Permission for Foreign Children) or they may give it to you at the time of application. The form will state the name of the school your child will attend and where it is located.



Once you receive the permission form, you are almost done. The PG should go to the school with their child/children and the "School Permission for Foreign Children form mentioned above. At the school, you will discuss the prospective course of your child's school life with the teachers. In principle, foreign children in Japan should receive the same education as Japanese children. In Japanese schools, a child's grade is determined by the student's age. Children who are born between April 2nd and April 1st of the following year will be in the same grade. Because of this, the Japanese grade may differ from the grade in the student's home country. However, be aware that when a child's Japanese language ability is weak, he/she may sometimes be enrolled in a (lower) grade more suitable for his/her language ability.

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 entering school. 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.obihoro.hokkaido.jp](mailto:international@city.obihoro.hokkaido.jp)

### Japanese Corner

就学/入学 (しゅうがく/にゅうがく): Entering school

外国人児童生徒入学申込書 (がいこくじん じどうせいと にゅうがく もうしこみしょ):  
School Entrance Application Form for Foreign Children

就学案内 (しゅうがくあんない): Guidance for Entering School Form

外国人児童生徒入学許可書 (がいこくじん じどうせいと にゅうがく きょかしょ):  
School Entrance Permission for Foreign Children

初等学校 (しょうがっこう) Elementary School: Sometimes officials and teachers use this term instead of the usual 小学校(しょうがっこう). It means the same thing, but it's just a little more formal. They can also use this form when talking about junior high and high schools.  
For example: 中等学校(ちゅうがっこう) and 高等学校(こうがっこう)



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

# This January At Cinema Taiyo Obihiro

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

Title	Language	Starts - Ends
Marie Antoinette	English	Jan 20 - Feb
Lucky Number 7	English	Jan 13 - Feb
Departed	English	Jan 13 - Feb
Ai no Ryukeichi (Penal Colony of Love??)	Japanese	Jan 13 - Feb
Sore demo Boku wa Yattenai	Japanese	Jan 20 - Feb
Doubutsu no Mori (this movie was a tv drama)	Japanese	Jan 20 - Feb
Dororo (samurai flick?)	Japanese	Jan 27 - Feb
Shiawase no Chikara (starring Will Smith)	English	Jan 27 - Feb



Eragon (fantasy movie about a dragon-rider)	English	Dec 9 - Feb
Letters from Iwo Jima	Japanese	Dec 9 - Feb
Bushi no Ichibun	Japanese	Dec 1 - Feb
Oh! Oku	Japanese	Dec 23 - Feb
Inugamike no Ichizoku	Japanese	Dec 16 - Jan 26
Open Season	Japanese	Dec 9 - Jan 19
007 Casino Royale	English	Dec 1 - Jan 12
NANA2	Japanese	Dec 9 - Jan 12
Bleach	Japanese	Dec 16 - Jan 19

## Caution 1 ~Noroviruses~

A very serious news, the large outbreak of infection, "stomach flu" (not related to the influenza), has been reported in Japan. This infection is caused by "noroviruses". This illness is not serious, even though you might feel very sick. It comes suddenly and lasts about 1 to 2 days. People who are infected should not prepare the foods. Below there are more details about this illness.

**Symptoms:** nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, fever, stomach cramping, headache, a general sense of tiredness.

**Cause:** eating and drinking things that are contaminated with noroviruses, touching objects that are contaminated with noroviruses and then placing the hand in the mouth, having direct contact with the person who is infected. Noroviruses are VERY contagious. It can be spread easily from person to person.

**Treatment:** there is no medication nor vaccine against noroviruses. Just drinking enough fluid to prevent dehydration. ※Sports drinks do not replace the nutrients and minerals of you body. Water, juice or oral rehydration fluids are recommended.

**Prevention:** Wash your hands frequently. Wash fruits and vegetables very carefully. Clean and disinfect contaminated surfaces after an episode of illness. Remove and wash contaminated clothing and linens. Flush or dispose any vomits/stool.

## Caution 2 ~Garbage~

As most of you know, garbage should be separated into certain categories when you dispose them. Each town has its own rule on how to separate, when to collect, where to dispose. So to avoid causing troubles to your neighbors, please follow the garbage separation guidelines of your city/town/village. (Garbage will only be collected on set days.)

If you have any question, please ask the International Relations Section @0155-24-4111 or [international@city.obihiro.hokkaido.jp](mailto:international@city.obihiro.hokkaido.jp)

## Editor's Board

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What's Happening in Obihiro?

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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.obihiro.hokkaido.jp](http://www.city.obihiro.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 [WHIOEditingTeam@city.obihiro.hokkaido.jp](mailto:WHIOEditingTeam@city.obihiro.hokkaido.jp).