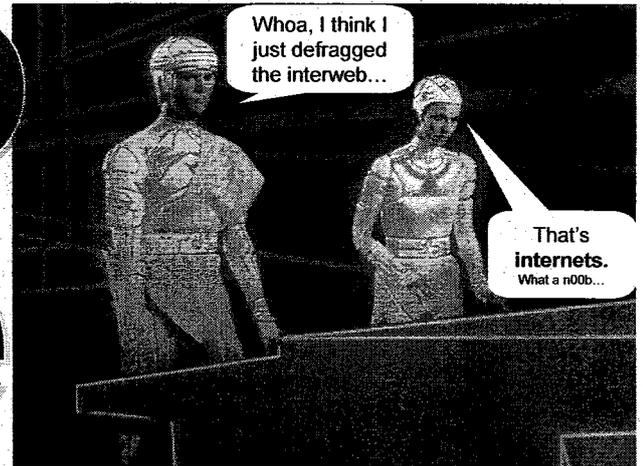


Obihiro Online



What?!! You haven't seen the new Obihiro homepage yet?

Obihiro's new city website was uploaded on November 26th, 2007. The address has not changed, but everything else has. There are two types of people who will use the city's webpage; those who can read Japanese, and those who cannot. For those of you who cannot read Japanese, or who find it excruciating to search through all those kanji just to find the topic you want, then you're going to want to immediately jump to the foreign language pages. As pictured below, there is a button in the upper right-hand corner of the city's homepage. The button is going to regrettably say "for Foreigners" on it at first, but that is going to change to say "English" as soon as possible. Clicking on that button it will take you to all of the current foreign language content.

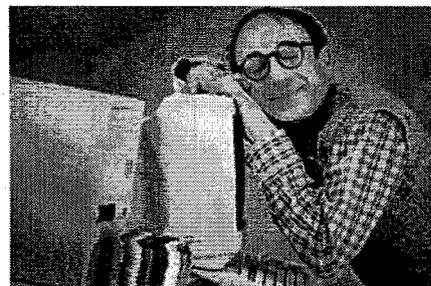


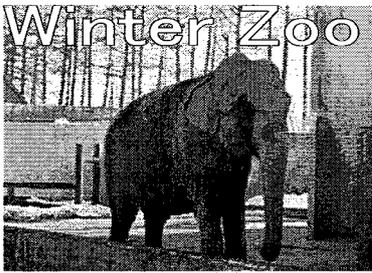
The portal to information in English and other languages

What do you expect from the Obihiro homepage?

At first, there is only going to be links to the Tokachi Living Guide, this newsletter (WHIO), and a link to the Tokachi International Association's (TIA) new website. We plan to add more and more content in the future, but for now we have chosen a few specific topics to put up quickly. In November, every Obihiro resident received a big fat green Citizens' Guidebook. It is an amazingly useful book, but it's written completely in Japanese. We looked through the contents of that book and picked out the following topics to translate and upload to the website as soon as possible: Emergency phone numbers, where to call for weekend/late-night hospitalization, evacuation areas and a map showing them, infant health, children's' health, and the information about the National Health Insurance system. They will be posted as fast as we can translate them! If you have any ideas about what kind of information we should or shouldn't put up on the city website, we are always open to suggestions and advice.

Another idea that we are considering is the complete digitalization of WHIO. Most people who read WHIO have internet access and would probably find it more convenient to have information on the web than a piece of paper in their hands. We could also cut back on paper-use (you would be shocked if you knew how much paper city hall uses in a year!). However, it's hard to take your computer in to the bathroom to read, and you can't make giant, brightly colored paper airplanes out of a pdf file. So, for now, this idea remains "under consideration." If you have an opinion either way, let us know right away





Tokachi Events

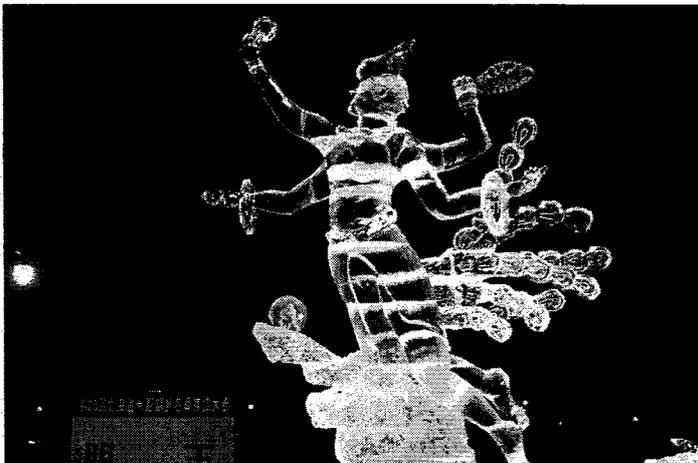
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January



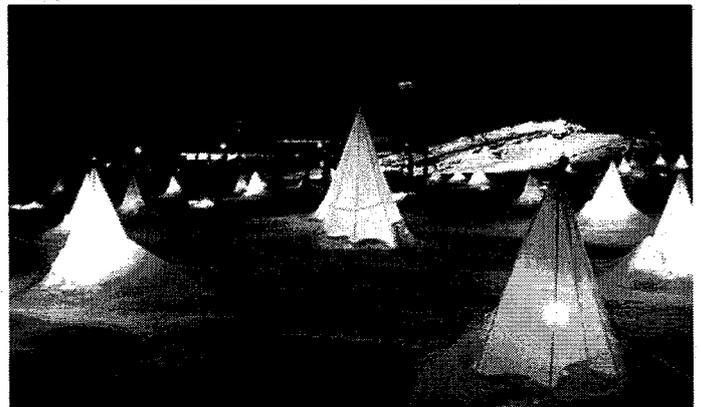
Hot tub in the middle of the frozen lake!
(Shikaribetsu Lake Kotan)

When	What	Where/Contact #
Weekends 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. They race on a sand track, but if it snows, the track disappears under a white blanket. 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
1/25-27 (Fri-Sun) 11:00-14:00	Winter Zoo: The Zoo opens in conjunction with the Obihiro Ice Festival ↓ Come see how lions, elephants, and giraffes survive in cold snowy Obihiro!	おびひろ動物園 Obihiro Zoo 0155-24-2437
1/25-27 (Fri-Sun) 10:00-20:00	Obihiro Ice Festival: 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 (Sun-Sun) 9:00 ~ 22:00	Shikaribetsu Lake Kotan: "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
1/26-3/3 (Sat-Sun) 19:00-21:00	Tokachi River Hakucho Festival: 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

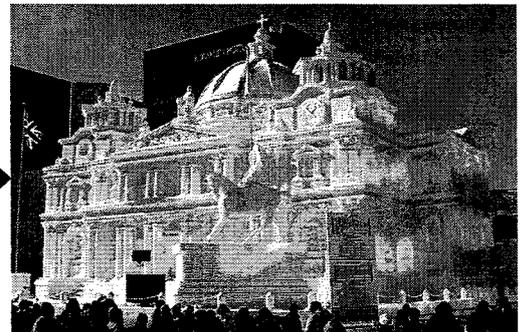
Obihiro Ice Festival



Tokachi River Hakucho Festival

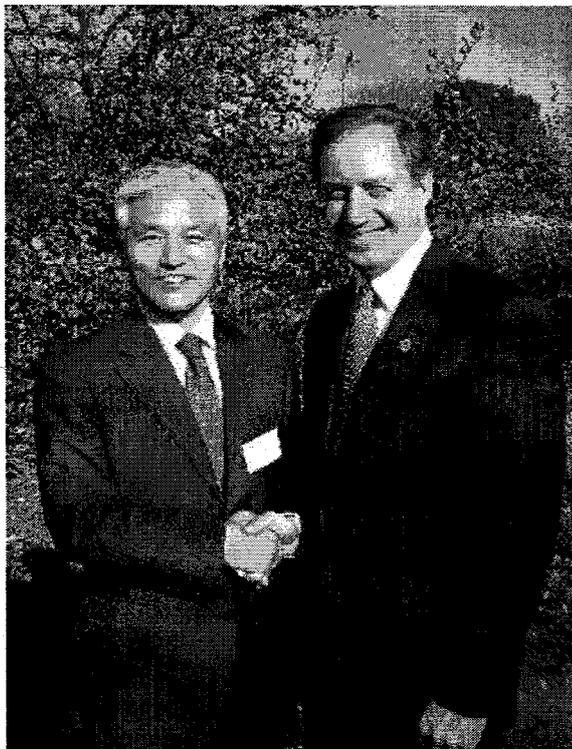


Note: The Sapporo Snow Festival (probably Hokkaido's biggest tourist attraction) will be Feb. 6th - 12th. If you don't have hotel reservations yet, you may be too late...



Major Events in January

The Mayor of Madison, Obihiro's newest sister city, is coming to visit at the end of January. Mayor "Dave" will only be here for a short time (from 1/24 to 1/28), but he is going to be giving various talks and presentations while touring many different facilities in and around Obihiro. If you don't know anything about Madison, you can always stop by the International and Domestic Relations Section (3rd floor of Obihiro City Hall) for information packets etc.

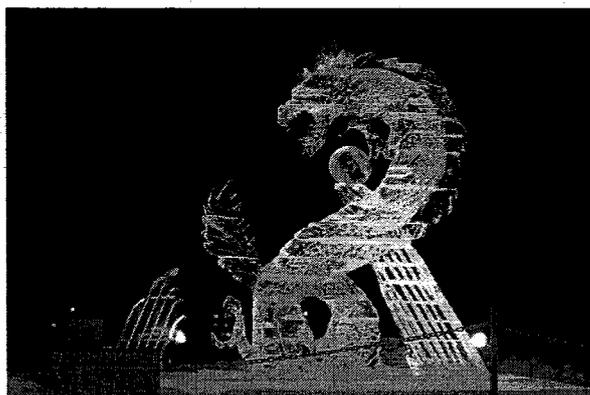


The mayor of Obihiro, Mr. Sunagawa (left), and the mayor of Madison, "Dave", shake hands in Madison at the official sister-city signing ceremony.

The Obihiro Ice Festival is also just around the corner. In fact, the Madison mayor's visit is planned to coincide with this festival.



The various ice and snow sculptures will be glowing in myriad lights and colors. Every year there are also huge snow sculptures made by various organizations including one really big one done by the Japan Self-Defense Forces who have a base here in Obihiro. Last year they made a giant model of the legendary battleship Yamato that was the pride of the Japanese fleet during WWII. After the opening ceremony on the 25th, where Mayor Dave will be helping to "cut the ice", there will be some winter fireworks to warm us all.



The Japanese Corner (vocab found in or related to this month's issue)

司法制度 (しほうせいど): "judicial system" The Japanese legal system has had some controversies and changes recently, so you might want to come to the free legal event (see back page).

相談 (そうだん): "consultation" This can be used in serious situations like "legal consultation" or it can even mean when you ask your friends for advice.

白鳥 (はくちょう): "swan", but literally means "white bird". Swans are actually quite common in the Tokachi area, and there is a certain time in Spring when the swans come back in mass and hang out on the Tokachi River, where people go to watch and feed the beasts.

氷像・雪像 (ひょうぞう・せつぞう): "ice sculpture" and "snow sculpture" These two are Hokkaido's specialty, and this winter there will be festivals all over the island with these works of art on display. The Obihiro Ice festival has everything from dragons and goddesses to Anpan-man.