

NIPPON QUARTERLY

Everything Japanese in the Fort Wayne Area

#34 – July 2026

Sponsored by the Japanese American Association of Indiana, Inc., a 501 c (3) community organization (www.jaain.org).

Our goal is to:

1. provide communication between the various segments of the Japanese American population of Northeast Indiana
2. Give you information about events that have happened or will happen that pertain to Japanese American culture, education, and community issues.

This is your community newsletter. As much as possible, it will be in English and Japanese. We welcome your input. It is quarterly.

ニッポン・クォーターリー

～フォートウェインエリアの日本の全て～

#34 07/2026

本新聞は JAAI が主体となり発行する日米新聞です。

私達のゴール:

1. インディアナ州北西部にお住いの日本人とアメリカ人にコミュニケーションの場を提供する
2. 日米の文化や教育、コミュニティについて、イベントの報告やお知らせを行う

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Food at 2026
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THE MAKING OF A KENDAMA MASTER: Interview with Michael Tsugawa

1. Describe your background (where born, grew up, siblings, etc.)

My father Stanford was a Sansei, born in Hawaii in 1929 well before WW2, and my mother Kathleen was a typical Midwestern Caucasian, from Door County, WI. They both worked for the VA hospital system, and so we moved frequently until I was born in New Haven, CT. We moved shortly after that to the Chicago suburbs, and I grew up there along with my older brother until I moved to Japan after college (I got my undergraduate in Psychology at University of Illinois, Champaign Urbana).



At the FW Cherry Blossom Festival, at my station.

2. How has your Japanese heritage influenced your life choices?

Growing up in the Chicago burbs in the 70s and 80s, there were almost no Asians in my neighborhood or elementary school (this changed when I got into high school), so I was always very conscious of feeling different. The only people around that looked like me were my brother and my dad (I don't resemble my mother very much), and since almost all of my dad's family were in Hawaii, we rarely ever saw them. When I got to high school, it turned out that there was a sizable Asian population around, heavily Filipino and Chinese. A lot of them

were the children of recent immigrants, so they had a very strong sense of identity, were almost always bilingual (often reluctantly), and their families maintained a lot of the culture that they emerged from. Among them, I definitely felt incomplete, and that led to a lot of curiosity about Japan. My father grew up bilingual but chose not to teach my brother and I any Japanese. I think a lot of his generation, having been incarcerated in the camps (Topaz and Tule Lake, in the case of our family) during WWII, refrained from doing much that identified them as Japanese American.

So, as a junior in high school (HS), I applied to the AFS for a study abroad scholarship, was awarded one, and selected Japan as my top choice of destination (you can list preferences, but there is no guarantee). As luck would have it, I was the only person I knew (5 others from my HS also won AFS scholarships that year) that got their first choice of country.

I spent 3 months in Sapporo with a wonderful host family that summer, trying to make sense of the language and the culture, and going to a local high school every day. That was the start of everything else; I studied Japanese in college and also spent my junior year in Kobe with a host family, went back to Japan on the JET program (Kobe again)and ended up as a university administrator at Kanazawa University. A series of circumstances in that job led to me teaching Japanese to international students for a semester, and meeting a professor from Tufts who encouraged me to pursue my masters degree in teaching, so I could be a high school Japanese teacher in the States. Though I had just met and married my wife (from Takaoka!), I had made up my mind that it was time to come home.

After finishing grad school in Boston, I looked for a teaching job as close to Chicago as I could find. At the time, Illinois had practically no HS programs, and Indiana had over 50. I landed at Michigan City High School, and ever since have been teaching Japanese to American HS students.

We are raising our 2 children, daughter Mia and son Noa, bilingually and biculturally to the best of our ability, and they both love Japan.

*Me and the family:
Wife Akiko, son Noa, daughter Mia*



3. What is your current occupation and how long have you been doing it?

I started teaching HS Japanese at Michigan City High School in 2002 and am still at it! Along the way, I coached tennis for about 20 years as well.

4. What do you enjoy most about your career?

It is so energizing to work with young people who are just getting their lives started and are full of possibility and dreams! Looking back, I can count several mentors who gave me the push or the advice or the ear or role model I needed. The most important thing I do every day is show up and try to be those things for my students.

In around 2007, we created a sister school relationship with Zama Sogo HS, and their students visit yearly every spring. It can be stressful, but to have created an opportunity for young Japanese people to find something about the US to love, and for my students to interact with a same age Japanese peer, stimulating their own curiosity to go to Japan themselves, is the best part of every school year.



Just me in my classroom.



This is me with my Japanese Olympiad Team students, at Earlham College

5. How did you become interested in the kendama?

For years, I had a lesson or two for my 1st year students where I showed them traditional toys and games from Japan. I showed them Hanafuda, a little bit of origami, Koma, Daruma Otoshi, and I had a cheap little kendama that I got at a 100 Yen shop. I took the kendama out of the closet, showed a catch or two and a spike, let some students try it, and tossed it back in the closet until the next year. I had little to no interest in Kendama myself!

One of our English teachers was rooting through my stuff and found it. He insisted that I show him some tricks and would not leave me alone until I did. A week later, he had bought one online and now he wouldn't leave me alone until I played Kendama with him a couple of times a week. It got to be kind of fun, but he took it much farther. He got Kendama USA to donate a classroom set to him, and he made lessons around them with social learning, peer teaching, growth mindset, goal setting.... you name it and he thought of it. He bugged me until I bought one, too. And then we were playing with students all the time -during class, after school, and during lunch.

Then he moved to New Zealand to become a carpenter (I am not kidding), and he told me "Okay Mike, you are the Kendama guy now"

6.. By what process did you become a 3rd Dan in the Japanese Kendama Association?

Shortly after he talked me into buying a Kendama, I was heading to Japan with my family, where we typically spend a month or so every summer with my wife's family. I did a little Internet searching to see if there were any Kendama clubs nearby, and it turned out there was. They were not only a super nice bunch of people, they were startled that an American guy had researched them and landed in their midst. So, they showed me all sorts of things and levels of tricks beyond what I imagined possible. Since I had just bought a JKA-certified Kendama, I asked them if I could test, to see where I stood. (In order to take Kyuu or Dan tests, or participate in JKA sponsored tournaments, one must have a certified Kendama, which is manufactured to a very precise size and proportion, with tolerances of less than 1mm.)

I fell well short of where I thought I should place and immediately got a private lesson from their head teacher, who gave me little nuggets of wisdom (example, he moved one of my fingers about a quarter of an inch) that instantly and permanently made me a better player and also showed me how profound an impact small changes can make.

Since then, testing with them when I see them in the summer is a challenge I can pencil into the calendar and practice and train for as a practical matter.... since that opportunity only comes around once a year for me. It is a lot of pressure to deal with, and that is one of the things I enjoy about it. If I do not do well, I have a year to wait before my next chance, and it is over in a matter of minutes, for better or worse.

7. What do you believe are the benefits of developing kendama skills?

The benefits go on and on and on! Some of the simplest include:

- stress relief
- an escape from screen time
- improved hand eye coordination
- a bit of light exercise - one can actually get a decent lower body work out from playing kendama
- making friends! Kendama has made for a great conversation starter between otherwise shy people in my classroom many, many times.
- a good fidget for restless hands that otherwise will find something to mess around with- therefore, a decent way to address anxiety
- They are practically indestructible, need no batteries, never have to be charged, are inexpensive, and come in an array of cool colors and designs.



Photo from Creative Commons

8. What are you yet hoping to achieve in Kendama levels?

The highest rank a player can achieve in kendama on pure skill is 6th Dan (above that, a player needs to contribute to the Kendama world at large, as a teacher, a competition judge, etc.), but I am hoping in the next few years to achieve 4th Dan.

The 4th Dan test has 3 parts, and the first 2 act as gatekeepers to the 3rd; they must both be cleared to even attempt the 3rd part. In 2023 and 2024, I failed both of those gatekeepers miserably. Last summer, I finally passed one fairly comfortably and got REALLY close to the other.

So, seeing that improvement, and still having the big challenge ahead of me keeps me playing and working hard on refining small things, what the Japanese call Kaizen.

9.What other interests or hobbies do you enjoy?

I love to cook, I play and teach tennis, read for pleasure when I have time, work out (both alone, and also do different workouts with my kids), and occasionally enjoy mountain biking (very badly)

10.What else should people know about the art of kendama?

It is truly what you make it. It can be a 5 minute break from your keyboard, a movement meditation to calm one's anxiety and improve focus, a social activity shared with a large group, a competitive sport, a great teaching tool, a metaphor for all sorts of teaching and learning, and every culture has something like it, whether that be the bilboquet, the balero, the ball-and-cup...it is universal for a reason. And that reason is that it is really, really cool!

Galentine's Day Is Finding Its Footing in Japan

As the focus on romance fades from Valentine's Day, a celebration centered on friendship quietly fills the gap.

[Mark Kennedy](#)

Jan 24, 2026

Galentine's Day, celebrated on February 13, honors female friendships. It is gaining popularity in Japan (image sourced from Photo AC)



- Galentine's Day (ギャレンタインデー), which celebrates female friendships on February 13, is gaining traction in Japan.
- Its rise reflects a decline in interest in romantic Valentine's traditions and fatigue with obligatory rituals, such as the custom of giving "obligatory chocolates," known as *giri-choco* (義理チョコ) in Japanese.
- Valentine's season is evolving into a flexible "celebration window," not a single romantic event on February 14.

What's new

Galentine's Day is a women-centered celebration that focuses on friendship rather than romance. It is becoming more visible in Japan as participation in traditional Valentine's Day customs continues to decline.

Why it matters

This shift signals a broader redefinition of intimacy, celebration, and emotional labor, particularly among younger generations who no longer view romance as a social priority.

Catch up quick

Valentine's Day entered Japan in 1958 as a department store promotion. It gained traction in 1959 after being reframed as "the one day a year women could confess their love to men."

By the late 1980s, this evolved into *giri-choco*, meaning "obligatory chocolates"—*gifts given by women to male coworkers, supervisors, and acquaintances to maintain social harmony rather than express affection.*

ギャレンタインデーが盛んになった

バレンタインデーからロマンスの要素が薄れるて、その代わりに友情を祝う行事になっています。

[マーク・ケネディ](#)

2026 年 1 月 24 日

ギャレンタインデーは2月13日に祝われ、女の人達の友情を祝います。日本で人気になっています。
(出典: AC フォト)

2月13日に女性同士の友情を祝う「ガレンタインデー」が、日本で注目を集めています。バレンタインデーは、2月14日の一般的なロマンチックなイベントから、臨機応変なお祝いへと進化しつつあります。その背景(はいけい)には関心の低下や、「義理チョコ」として知られる義務的なチョコレートを贈る習慣などの習慣への倦怠感を反映しています。バレンタインシーズンは、2月14日の一般的なロマンチックなイベントから、臨機応変なお祝いへと進化します。

最近の傾向

女性が友情をいいう習慣です。日本では、伝統的なバレンタインデーの慣習に従う人が減っているため、ますます一般的になっています。

ギャレンタインデーが大切な理由

この変化はもうロマンスを社会的優先事項とみなさない傾向にある若い世代の人々の中で親密さとお祝いと感情労働の幅広い再定義をします。

早くキャッチアップ

バレンタインデーは1958年にデパートのプロモーションとして日本に入りました。1959年に「女の人は男の人に愛が告白ができるのは一年に1日だけ」というビジネスアイデアが広まりました。

1980年代後半、このアイディアは義務的な義理チョコになりました。つまり、愛情を表すよりも社会的な調和を保つため、女の人は同僚、監督や知人の男の人にプレゼントをあげます。

In 1978, White Day was introduced as the reciprocal counterpart, requiring men to return gifts on March 14, often of greater value.

Galentine's Day, by contrast, arrived in Japan in the 2010s, imported through global media and social media platforms as an unofficial celebration of female friendship on February 13. "Galentine" is a blend word (also called a *portmanteau*). More precisely, it is a lexical blend formed by combining:

- **gal** (informal term for "woman" or "girl")
- **Valentine** (from Valentine's Day)

The result—*Galentine*—creates a new word (neologism) with a related but distinct meaning: a celebration centered on female friendship rather than romantic partnership.



Guys, you might still get a box of giri-choco in Japan (image sourced from Photo AC)

男の人の皆さん、日本で義理チョコの箱をもらってかもしれません。(写真は Photo AC に来ました)

1978 年には、ホワイトデーがつくられされ、3 月 14 日に男性が女性に贈り物を返す日になりました。そして、これらの贈り物は女性から贈られるものよりも高価な場合が多いのです。

対照的に、ギャレンタインデーは 2010 年だに日本へやってきて、2 月 13 日に世界のメディアやソーシャルメディアプラットフォームを通じて、女性の友情を祝う非公式のお祝いとなりました。「ギャレンタイン」は複合語です。

- **ギャル** (「女性」または「少女」の非公式な用語)
- **バレンタイン** (バレンタインデーより)

結果として、ギャレンタインデーという新しいことばを生み出し、ロマンチックな関係ではなく、女性の友情を中心としたお祝いに使いま

Details

Galentine's Day centers on women spending time with their female friends, hosting small gatherings, exchanging modest gifts, and enjoying sweets together. The concept originated in a 2010 episode of *Parks and Recreation*, where it was defined as "women celebrating women."

"Every February 13th, my lady friends and I leave our husbands and our boyfriends at home, and we just come and kick it—breakfast-style." — *Leslie Knope, the optimistic, civic-minded protagonist of the comedy Parks and Recreation, portrayed by Amy Poehler.*

In Japan, its appeal lies less in novelty and more in providing relief from the pressure of confessions, workplace calculations, and mandatory reciprocity.

By the numbers

- **11.9%** of respondents say they are "**not interested**" in **Valentine's Day**—the single most common response.
- **Only 3.5%** view Valentine's Day as an opportunity to confess romantic feelings.
- Average spending prioritizes the self: **2,243 yen (approximately US \$14.41) on self-gifting** versus only 1,090 yen (\$7) on courtesy chocolates.
- Government and academic surveys show Gen Z reporting significantly lower interest in dating, marriage, and sexual relationships compared with older generations.

詳細

ギャレンタインデーに女の人は、友達と遊んだり、ささやかなパーティーをしたり、プレゼントをあげあったり、スイーツを食べたりします。2010 年の「Parks and Recreation」というテレビショーのエピソードに登場し、ギャレンタインデーは「女の人同士が祝う日」になりました。

「Parks and Recreation」に登場するエイミー・ポラーが演じる楽天で情け深いレスリー・ノップという主人公は「私は毎年 2 月 13 日に家に夫や彼氏を残して女の人の友達と遊びに行くよ。」と言いました。

日本では、その魅力は目新しさにあるというよりも、告白のプレッシャーや、職場での駆け引き、そしてお返しを当然とする相互関係から解放される点にあります。

統計

回答者の **11.9%** はバレンタインデーに「興味がない」と述べていました。これは 1 番多い回答でした。

回答者のうち、バレンタインデーを恋愛感情を告白する機会と捉えているのはわずか **3.5%** です。

平均的な支出は、自分へのプレゼントが **2,243 円 (約 14.41 ドル)** で、義理チョコはわずか **1,090 円 (訳 7 ドル)** です。

政府および学術研究によると、Z 世代は年長世代に比べてデート、結婚、性的関係への関心がとても低いと報告しています。

Context

For decades, Valentine's Day in Japan has functioned as a tightly scripted social system. On February 14, women give chocolates, and on White Day, men reciprocate. *Giri-choco* maintains workplace harmony. This structure worked when conformity reduced social risk.

However, as workplaces become more open and younger workers prioritize boundaries, the cost of participating now outweighs the cost of opting out.

Conventional wisdom

Valentine's Day is often portrayed as a harmless seasonal custom. In practice, however, it has institutionalized gendered expectations around spending, emotional signaling, and unpaid coordination, especially for women.



Ultimately, it's the chocolatiers who are most likely to benefit (image sourced from Photo AC)

つまり、最も恩恵を受けやすいのはチョコレート職人です。(出典：AC フォト)

Friction point

The decline of *giri-choco* reflects resistance to invisible labor. Women were expected to remember recipients, calibrate the value of gifts, avoid showing favoritism, and handle emotional ambiguity—all without receiving any recognition for it. As norms around hierarchy, gender roles, and workplace intimacy become more flexible, the social penalty for not participating has largely disappeared.

Flashback

When *giri-choco* entered common usage around 1988, it dramatically expanded the chocolate market. Media coverage in the late 1980s and early 1990s quantified the expected "returns," turning Valentine's Day and White Day into transactional events rather than symbolic exchanges.

Interest in Valentine's Day as a romantic holiday seems to be waning among Gen Z (image sourced from Photo AC)



背景

何十年もの間、バレンタインデーは厳格に定められた社会システムのように機能していました。女の人には2月14日に男の人にチョコレートあげて、男の人はホワイトデーにお返しをします。義理チョコは職場の融和を保つ役割を担っていました。この社会構造は、同調が社会的リスクを低減した時代にはうまく機能していました。

しかし、職場は開放的になって若い労働者が公私の優先するにつれて、参加するコストは、参加しないことのコストが上回るようになっている。

一般的な見方

しかし実際には、バレンタインデーは特に女性に対して、出費や感情の表明、さらには見えない調整労働を当然視する、ジェンダー化された期待を制度として定着させてきた。

摩擦点

義理チョコの衰退は、目に見えない労働に対する抵抗の表れです。女性は、誰に渡すかを覚え、贈り物の金額を調整し、特定の相手をエコひいきしていると思われないよう気を配り、さらには感情面の微妙な曖昧さにも対処することを求められてきました。しかも、その労力が正当に評価されることはほとんどありませんでした。上下関係やジェンダーの役割、職場内の親密さに関する規範がより柔軟になるなかで、参加しないことによる社会的な不利益は、今ではほぼ消えなくなっています。

振り返り

1988年頃に「義理チョコ」ということばが一般的に使われるようになると、チョコレート市場は劇的に拡大しました。1980年代後半から1990年代初頭にかけてのマスメディアは、予期される「収益」を数値化し、バレンタインデーやホワイトデーを象徴的な交換ではなく、より取引の場へと変えられました。

Z世代の中ではバレンタインデーはロマンチックな祝日としてみる傾向が低いようです。(出典：AC フォト)

Commentary

This topic brought back memories of receiving dozens of small *giri-choco* gifts from female colleagues at the Tokyo-based subsidiary of an American medical device manufacturer that I helped found and subsequently ran in the 2010s. Although the Galentine's Day phenomenon had not yet caught on in Japan, the tradition of giving *giri-choco* was still prevalent, and I was expected to reciprocate on White Day. As the leader of a foreign-funded subsidiary in Japan, I was acutely aware that certain members of the staff might view my response critically. Not only was the touchy subject of gender a related issue, but I also had to consider that not every female associate gave me *giri-choco*. (No, I didn't keep score!)

The first time this happened, I consulted our director of HR to discuss how best to respond. Ultimately, we decided that I should give a small gift of low value on White Day to every female associate, regardless of whether they had given me *giri-choco*, along with a common note expressing my gratitude for their contribution to the team. After a few years, we decided it would be better ***not*** to encourage this ritual. We prohibited the provision of *giri-choco* to me by announcing the revised policy at the beginning of the year. That was the end of the practice at our firm, which, in retrospect, was probably the best course of action.

Go deeper

The rise of Galentine's Day reflects Gen Z attitudes. Surveys consistently show that younger Japanese adults are less interested in dating, sex, and long-term romantic commitment. As romance loses its central organizing role, friendship-based and self-defined celebrations emerge as alternatives that better reflect reality.

For brands and retailers, Galentine's Day signals ***a shift from obligation-driven purchasing to emotionally elective consumption***. Products that emphasize small indulgences, shared experiences, customization, and low-pressure gifting outperform grand romantic gestures. The opportunity lies not in replacing Valentine's Day, but in expanding the season to encompass different meanings.

What do you think?

It's uncertain whether Galentine's Day will stick around, at least in Japan.

解説

このバレンタインデーは私が 2010 年代に設立と運営を手伝ったアメリカ系医療機器メーカーの東京支店で同僚の女の人達に小さい義理チョコをもらったことを思い出させました。その頃はギャレンタインデーはまだ日本では人気がありませんでしたが、義理チョコをあげる文化は人気がありましたから、私もホワイトデーにお返しをすることが期待されていました。東京支店のリーダーとして、私の対応が一部の社員から批判的に受け止められるかもしれないことを強く意識していました。ジェンダーというセンシティブな問題が関わっていたのはもちろんしていましたが、すべての女性社員が私に義理チョコをくれたわけではないという点にも配慮しなければいけませんでした。(女性社員をランク付けしていたわけではないです！)

最初にこの状況になったとき、どう対応するのが最善かを相談するため、人事部長と話し合いました。最終的には、義理チョコをくれたかどうかにかかわらず、ホワイトデーにはすべての女性社員に高価ではないちょっとした贈り物を渡し、あわせてチームへの貢献への感謝を伝える共通のメッセージを添えることにしました。その後数年が経ち、私たちはこの文化をやめた方がいいと判断しました。そこで年初に方針変更を発表し、私個人に対する義理チョコを禁止しました結果として、この慣習は社内からなくなり、今振り返れば、それが最も適切な対応だったと思います。

さらに掘り下げると・・・

ギャレンタインデーの広がり、Z 世代の価値観を反映しています。各種調査は一貫して、若年層の成人の日本人は、デートや性行為、長期的な恋愛関係への関心が低いことを示しています。恋愛が人生を方向づける中心的な枠組みではなくなるなかで、友情を基盤とする祝い方や、自分たちで意味を与える新しい祝祭の形が、現実により即するように変化した表れになっています。

ブランドや小売業者にとって、ギャレンタインデーは義務志向の購買から感情的な選択的消費への転換を示しています。小さな贅沢や共有できる体験、カスタマイズ、そして気軽に贈れるギフトを重視する製品は、大げさな恋愛の姿勢を上回ります。これは拡大するチャンスなのです。バレンタインデーを別のものに置き換えることにあるのではなく、シーズンを多様な意味を含むものへと拡大することにあります。

あなたは どう 思いますか。

日本で、ギャレンタインデーがずっと人気であり続けるかは分かりません。

The bottom line

Japan's Valentine's season has fractured into parallel paths: romance for some, friendship for others, self-reward for many, and disengagement for a growing minority.

Galentine's Day is gaining popularity because it provides a sense of connection without obligation, which is precisely what many modern consumers now seek.

結論

日本のバレンタインの季節は、様々な形に分かれています。恋愛を楽しむ人、友情を育む人、自分へのご褒美を求める人、そして少数ながら無関心な人などがいます。ギャレンタインデーは、義務感なく繋がりを感じられるという点で人気が高まっており、まさに現代の多くの消費者が求めているものです。

Links to Japanese Sources: <https://news.yahoo.co.jp/articles/4770d48586f60629a69e09e463e422ff289c0c03>, <https://www.sazaby-league.co.jp/news/561923>, <https://blog.brainpad.co.jp/entry/2017/02/09/120000>, and <https://forbesjapan.com/articles/detail/69079>.

#ValentinesDayJapan #GalentinesDay #ConsumerTrends #GiriChoco #CelebrationEconomy #JapaneseCulture #RetailStrategy #WomenConsumers #neologism #portmanteau #バレンタインデー #ギャレンタイン #消費トレンド #日本文化 #マーケティング戦略 #女性消費 #世話チョコ #逆チョコ #自分チョコ

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<https://realgaijin.substack.com/p/galentines-day-is-finding-its-footing>

-Translated by Hailey Jalovecky, Carmella Pittman, Karina Stotlz, reviewed by Adachi Reon, Reiko Ileleji

Feedback from an Anonymous Reader – *The opinions expressed are solely that of the anonymous reader, not the NQ staff.*

"It was interesting to read about Galentine's Day, as I had never heard that word before.

It is also interesting to see that, in the U.S., concepts that previously did not have a specific name are often named or labeled, result in turning into a trend, and then celebrated. For example, Galentine's Day and first-generation college students.

One thing I noticed while reading the article is that the language made it seem as Valentine's Day in Japan is something people are required to celebrate, especially in your translation of words such as 「義務」 and 「祝日」. However, Valentine's Day or Galentine's Day is just another day in Japan. It is NOT a national holiday, and people are not required to give chocolate. This language makes it sound like a high-stakes custom, when in reality it is largely a business idea intended to boost chocolate sales.

Another critique I have is that, according to my quick research, Japan was not the place where Valentine's Day first came to be recognized as "the only day when women confess their affection to men." Rather, that idea seems to have originated in Rome or perhaps in a broader European or Christian context. Reading your article, however, gives the impression that Japan was the one that started this practice. At the same time, I do believe it was Japanese chocolate companies that helped establish the custom of giving chocolate on Valentine's Day in Japan."

Japanese Culture in Bloom: Interviews with Michele Yamanaka & Mitsuhiro Sumiya

written and translated by Evan Seid

Interview Overview: Michele Yamanaka is one of the founders of the Japanese American Association of Indiana (JAAI), as well as Fort Wayne's Cherry Blossom Festival. She works as an organizer for the festival and is an editor for Northeast Indiana's quarterly newsletter, Nippon Quarterly. Mitsuhiro Sumiya is an organizer for the Carmel Spring Festival. A third-year student studying Japanese at Ball State University recently interviewed them to learn more about them and what these festivals mean to Indiana and Japanese communities.

インタビュー概要：ミッシェル・ヤマナカ氏は、インディアナ日系アメリカ人協会（JAAI）の創設者の一人であり、フォートウェイン桜祭りの立ち上げにも携わりました。現在は祭りの運営を担当するとともに、インディアナ州北東部で発行されている季刊誌「Nippon Quarterly」の編集者も務めています。また、角谷三博はカーメル・スプリングフェスティバルの運営に携わっています。今回、ボールステート大学で日本語を専攻する3年生が、お二人にインタビューを行い、それぞれの活動や、これらの祭りがインディアナ州および日本人コミュニティにとってどのような意義を持つのかについてお話を伺いました。



Photo by Jerry Etnier

1. Please tell me a little about yourself.

Michele: "My name is Michele Yamanaka. I was born in America, Utah specifically, and have lived in Fort Wayne since 1978. I married a Japanese citizen who became an American citizen. I moved to Indiana because my husband transferred to Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne to finish his training to be a pastor. I came too."

Mitsuhiro: "My name is Mitsuhiro Sumiya (Sumiya Mitsuhiro). I am originally from Japan's Kansai region. Although I was born in Japan, I had many opportunities to live abroad from an early age, which allowed me to become accustomed to an international and multicultural environment. I was raised in Australia, later spent many years in Japan as a working adult, and have also lived in the United States. My decision to relocate to the United States was driven by both business opportunities and consideration for my family's future. Indiana, in particular, is home to many Japanese companies, making it an attractive place for Japanese professionals to work. At the same time, the close-knit local communities and high quality of life made it an ideal place to settle, which ultimately played a key role in my decision."

1. ご自身について少し教えてください。

ミッシェル：私はミッシェル・ヤマナカです。アメリカ生まれで、出身はユタ州です。1978年からフォートウェインに住んでいます。日本国籍だった夫と結婚し、夫は後にアメリカ市民になりました。夫が牧師になるための訓練を修了するために、フォートウェインのコンコルディア神学校へ編入したことをきっかけに、私もインディアナへ移り住みました。

三博：私は角谷三博（すみや みつひろ）です。日本の関西圏出身で、日本で生まれましたが、幼少期から海外で過ごす機会が多く、グローバルな環境に親しんできました。オーストラリアで育ち、社会人として長く日本で過ごした後、アメリカでも生活しています。アメリカへ移住したきっかけは、ビジネスの機会と家族の将来を考えたことです。インディアナは日本企業が多く進出しており、日本人にとって働きやすい環境であると同時に、地域コミュニティとの距離も近く、生活の質が高いと感じたことが決め手となりました。

2. For Michele, have you ever been to Japan? If so, are there any specific memories you have from there?

"I have been there twice. The first time I went was with my husband and 1 year old baby to meet my in-laws for the first time. They lived in Hirata City in Shimane at the end of the train route. They had a traditional Japanese home with a small garden in front, and rice fields on 2 sides. When I was introduced to my in-laws outside in the garden, I threw up at their feet because I had morning sickness. My mother-in-law immediately took charge of the baby and enjoyed taking care of her for the 6 weeks we were in Japan. When we went the second time, there were 4 of us, my husband and I and our 2 daughters. During that visit, we visited a lot of the "tourist" places, including some temples and the monkey park. Wherever we went, my girls always found animals to appreciate."



3. For Mitsuhiro, what about Indiana is different from Japan? (Japanese community, culture, Japanese festivals, etc.)

"One of the biggest differences between Indiana and Japan is that the Japanese community in Indiana is more spread out. In Japan, communities often form naturally, whereas here they require a more intentional effort to build and maintain. At the same time, the region's cultural diversity creates many opportunities to form new relationships and broaden one's network, which I find particularly appealing."

4. What about America do you like the most, or more specifically, what do you like the most about Indiana?

Michele: "The flowers and flowering trees that grow wild along the country roads."

Mitsuhiro: "I appreciate cultures where people maintain close personal connections and place a strong value on community. In particular, I have found that many people in Indiana are warm and friendly, which makes it easier to build trusting relationships in both professional and personal settings. This is one of the things I like most about living here."

2. 日本には2回行ったことがあります。 -11

1回目は、夫と1歳の娘を連れて、義理の両親に初めて会うために行きました。義理の両親は、島根県の平田市に住んでいました。そこは鉄道の終点に近い場所でした。家は小さな庭のある伝統的な日本家屋で、両側には田んぼが広がっていました。庭で義理の両親に紹介された時、つわりがひどく、義理の両親に紹介された際に足元で吐いてしまいました。した。けてくれ、日本に滞在していた6週間の間、とてもかわいがって面倒を見てくれました。

2回目に行った時は、夫と私、そして2人の娘の4人でした。その時は、お寺や猿公苑を始め、多くの観光名所を訪れました。どこへ行っても娘たちはいつも動物を見つけては楽しんでいました。

Photo by Jerry Etnier

3. 三博へ、インディアナは、日本とどのような点が異なりますか。（日本人のコミュニティ、文化、日本の祭りなど）

インディアナは日本に比べて、日本人コミュニティが分散している点が大きな違いです。日本では自然に形成されるコミュニティも、こちらでは意識的に作っていく必要があります。その一方で、多様な文化が共存しており、新しいつながりを生み出す機会が多いという魅力も

4. アメリカのどのようなところが一番好きですか？あるいは、より具体的に言えば、インディアナのどのようなところが一番好きですか。

ミッシェル：田舎道沿いに自然に咲く花や花の咲く木々がとても好きです。

三博：人と人との距離が近く、コミュニティを大切にす文化があるところが好きです。特にインディアナは温かくフレンドリーな方が多く、ビジネスでもプライベートでも信頼関係を築きやすい点が魅力だと感じています。

5. For Michele, what is the main purpose of the Cherry Blossom Festival in Fort Wayne? And why did you choose to be a part of organizing them?

The following is from a grant application for the second year of the festival. It asked the purpose of the festival.

- To encourage better understanding of Japanese culture by celebrating the blossoming of the Cherry Blossoms as it is celebrated in Japan by highlighting the arts, culture and food of Japan with the community.
- To celebrate the 400th year anniversary of Takaoka, Japan, Fort Wayne's Sister City

"I chose to help organize the festival because it was an idea from our Japanese American Association community group, of which I was the current chair. We wanted to give back to our community because we felt that Japan had so much to offer through its art and culture."



6. For Mitsuhiro, what is the main purpose of the Spring Festival in Carmel? And why did you choose to be a part of organizing them?

"The primary purpose of the festival is to introduce Japanese culture to a wider audience while also bringing together members of the local Japanese community. I feel that the Japanese community in Indiana is somewhat dispersed, and I became involved in organizing this event because I wanted to create a space where people could come together and build stronger connections."

5. ミッシェルへ、フォートウェインで開催される「桜祭り」の主な目的は何ですか？また、なぜあなたは、その運営に携わることを選ばれたのですか。

この内容は、祭りの2年目の助成金申請書からのものです。その中で、祭りの目的について次のように説明しました。

- 日本で桜の開花を祝うのと同じように、桜の開花を通して日本文化を祝うことで、日本の芸術、文化、食を地域社会と共有し、日本文化への理解を深めてもらうこと。
- フォートウェインの姉妹都市である高岡市の400周年を祝うこと。

私がこの祭りの運営に携わることにしたのは、当時私が会長を務めていた日系アメリカ人協会のコミュニティグループから生まれた企画だったからです。私たちは、日本の芸術や文化には地域社会に多くの価値をもたらす力があると感じており、その魅力を地域の皆様と共有することで、地域への恩返しをしたいと考えていました。

Photo by Jerry Etnier

6. 三博へ、カーメルで開催される「スプリング・フェスティバル」の主な目的は何ですか？また、なぜあなたは、その運営に携わることを選ばれたのですか。

主な目的は、日本文化を広く紹介すると同時に、地域に住む日本人コミュニティをつなぐことです。私は、インディアナの日本人コミュニティがやや分散していると感じており、それを一つにまとめる場を作りたいという思いから、このイベントの運営に関わるようになりました。

7. How did the festival start?

Michele: "The first festival was on April 22, 2007. The Japanese American Association of Indiana (JAAI), which was just a community organization at that time, wanted to showcase the beauty of Japanese art and culture with the community. The festival coincided with recognition of the Fort Wayne-Takaoka Sister City relationship and the Fort Wayne Sister Cities International board, who helped with the planning for the first festival and was the financial entity through which donations for the festival came until JAAI became a 501(c)(3) on its own."

Mitsuhiro: "This festival was launched last year as an event to introduce Japanese culture to the local community, inspired by the sister-city relationship between the City of Carmel and Kawachinagano City in Japan. This year, the festival has expanded in scale and is growing into a well-established community event."



7. その祭りはどのように始まったのですか。

ミッシェル：第1回の祭りは2007年4月22日に開催されました。当時はまだ地域のコミュニティ団体だったインディアナ日系アメリカ人協会（JAAI）が、日本の芸術や文化の美しさを地域の皆様に紹介したいと考えたことがきっかけです。また、この祭りはフォートウェイン市と高岡市の姉妹都市関係を祝う取り組みとも重なっていました。フォートウェイン姉妹都市国際委員会（Fort Wayne Sister Cities International Board）は、第1回祭りの企画・運営を支援だけでなく、JAAIが独自に501(c)(3)の非営利団体資格を取得するまで、祭りへの寄付金を受け入れる財政的な受け皿としての役割も担っていました。

三博：この祭りは、カーメル市と姉妹都市である河内長野市との交流を背景に、日本文化を地域に紹介するイベントとして去年始まりました。今年は規模が拡大し、地域に根付いたイベントへと成長しています。

Photo by Jerry Etnier

8. What is the significance of this festival for the Japanese community in Indiana, or even the Japanese communities in the surrounding areas?

Michele: "It gives people of Japanese heritage an opportunity to celebrate the uniqueness of Japanese art and culture, promote pride in their heritage and help the community at large appreciate how much Japan has positively influenced our daily lives."

Mitsuhiro: "This festival serves not only as a valuable opportunity for members of the Japanese community to strengthen their connections with one another, but also as a bridge that helps local residents gain a deeper understanding of Japanese culture. I believe it is an extremely important event for both community building and cultural exchange."

8. この祭りは、インディアナの日本人コミュニティにとって、どのような意義を持っているのでしょうか。

ミッシェル：この祭りは、日本にルーツを持つ人々が日本の芸術や文化の魅力を再認識し、その伝統や文化に誇りを持つことができる貴重な機会です。同時に、日本が私たちの日常生活に与えてきた多くの良い影響について、地域社会の方々に理解を深めていただく役割も果たしています。

三博：この祭りは、日本人同士のつながりを深める貴重な場であると同時に、現地の方々に日本文化を理解していただく架け橋の役割も担っています。コミュニティ形成と文化交流の両方において、非常に重要なイベントだと考えています。

9. For Michele, what about the Cherry Blossom Festival in Fort Wayne reflects Japan's tradition of celebrating them every spring?

"The first festival was in April, about the time when the cherry trees often are blooming. We did not know if there would be another festival. We had so much positive feedback from the first festival that we decided to continue it. However, April Fort Wayne weather is not friendly to festivals and we moved the date to May. Although the festival was no longer during the actual blooming of the cherry trees, for most Americans "Cherry Blossoms" equal Japan. So we have done our best to make sure that cherry blossoms are honored at our festival. We have an original large hanging of a bare cherry tree painted by artist Sayaka Ganz. It is hung from one floor to the next in the atrium. Festival goers are encouraged to stop at the table near the hanging to learn how to make origami blossoms. They then fasten the blossoms onto the tree to "make the cherry tree bloom".



Photo from Carmel Sister City, Inc Facebook

10. For Mitsuhiro, what about the Spring Festival in Carmel reflects Japan's tradition of celebrating them every spring?

"In addition to being centered around the theme of cherry blossoms, the festival recreates the atmosphere of a traditional Japanese spring celebration through taiko drumming and yosakoi performances, Japanese cuisine, and a variety of cultural experience booths."

9. ミッシェルへ、フォートウェインの桜祭りには、日本で毎年春に桜を祝う伝統がどのように反映されていますか。

第1回の祭りは4月に開催されました。ちょうど桜が咲く時期に合わせたものでしたが、その時点では翌年翌年以降も開催されるかどうかは分かりませんでした。しかし、第1回の祭りには非常に多くの好意的な反響が寄せられたため、継続して開催することを決めました。しかし、第1回の祭りには非常に多くの好意的な反響が寄せられたため、継続して開催することを決めました。

ただし、フォートウェインの4月の天候は屋外イベントにはあまり適していなかったため、その後は開催時期を5月に変更しました。そのため、実際の桜の開花時期とは重ならなくなりましたが、多くのアメリカ人にとって「桜」は日本を象徴する存在です。そこで私たちは、祭りの中で桜を大切に取上げるよう努めてきました。

会場のアトリウムには、アーティストのサヤカ・ガンツ氏が制作した大きな桜の木の作品が展示されています。葉も花もない桜の木が描かれた作品で、吹き抜けの1階から2階にかけて吊り下げられています。

来場者は、その作品の近くに設けられたブースで折り紙の桜の花の作り方を学ぶことができます。そして、自分で作った花を木に取り付けることで、みんなで「桜を咲かせる」体験ができるようになっています。

10. 三博へ、カーメルの「スプリング・フェスティバル」のどのような点が、日本の春の伝統を反映していると言えるでしょうか？

桜をテーマにしたイベントであることに加え、和太鼓やよさこいなどのパフォーマンス、日本食の提供、文化体験ブースなどを通じて、日本の春の風物詩やお祭りの雰囲気を再現しています。

11. On average, how many people come to this festival every year? And is there a wide variety of people that come to this festival? (Age, Americans, Japanese-Americans, and Japanese people)

Michele: “In recent years, we estimate 10,000 to 12,000 in attendance. We try to take a survey of festival goers to get demographics. All ages are represented, but the majority are 18-39 and about 20% are Asian or Asian American, not just Japanese.”

Mitsuhiro: “Despite unfavorable weather conditions, the festival attracted approximately 4,000 visitors in 2025. For 2026, we are expecting attendance to grow to around 10,000 people. The festival draws a remarkably diverse audience, including local Americans, Japanese nationals, Japanese-Americans, and people of all ages, from families with children to younger generations.”



12. For Michele, how do you promote the Cherry Blossom Festival?

“Through our Cherry Blossom Festival website, quarterly newsletter, flyers, social media, printed publications, tv and newspaper interviews. We also promote it through our fund-raising efforts with businesses.”

11. 例年、この祭りには平均してどれくらいの人を訪れるのでしょうか？また、来場者の層は幅広いのでしょうか？（年齢、アメリカ人、日系アメリカ人、および日本人）

ミッシェル：近年では、来場者数はおよそ1万人から1万2千人と見込んでいます。来場者の属性を把握するため、できる限りアンケート調査を実施しています。

年齢層は非常に幅広く、あらゆる世代の方々にご来場いただいておりますが、最も多いのは18歳から39歳の層です。また、来場者の約20％はアジア系またはアジア系アメリカ人であり、日本人や日系アメリカ人に限らず、さまざまなアジア系コミュニティの方々にご参加いただいております。

三博：2025年は天候が悪い中でも約4,000人の来場がありました。2026年は約10,000人の来場を見込んでいます。来場者は非常に幅広く、ローカルのアメリカ人、日本人、日系アメリカ人、そして家族連れから若い世代まで多様な方々に参加いただいております。

Photo @cityofcarmelin on Instagram

12. ミッシェルへ、桜祭りはどのように広報していますか。

桜祭りの公式ウェブサイト、季刊ニュースレター、チラシ、ソーシャルメディア、各種印刷媒体、テレビや新聞での取材・インタビューなど、さまざまな媒体を活用して広報を行っています。また、企業への協賛依頼や資金調達活動を通じて、祭りの魅力や目的を積極的に発信しています。

12. For Mitsuhiro, how do you promote the Carmel Spring Festival?

“We promote the festival through a wide range of channels, including social media, outreach to local community organizations, posters displayed at local businesses, partnerships with sponsoring companies, and word-of-mouth recommendations. We also actively share information with Japanese companies and related organizations to help broaden awareness and encourage participation.”

13. Does this festival receive a generous amount of volunteers? On average, how many volunteers come to help every year? Is there a wide variety of volunteers? (Age, Americans, Japanese-Americans, and Japanese people)

Michele: “We are always short on volunteers. However, those who do volunteer work incredibly hard and are enthusiastic about participating. If you count the JAAI board, the CBF planning committee and other volunteers, we may have 80. We always hope for 100. Age-wise, PFW requires that all volunteers must be 18 or older. So a majority of our volunteers are between 18-25. However we have older adults who regularly volunteer for particular jobs they enjoy. While the majority of volunteers may not be of Asian heritage, young Asian American volunteers are common-not just of Japanese heritage, but also Burmese, Chinese, Filipino, Thai, etc. The festival gives them an opportunity to be proud of their Asian heritage. We also get volunteers from other parts of Indiana. We had several from Carmel last year who wanted to see how we were doing at our festival so they could pass on ideas to the Carmel festival planners.”

12. 三博へ、スプリング・フェスティバルはどのように宣伝していますか？

ソーシャルメディア、地域コミュニティへの案内、地元のお店でのポスター掲示、スポンサー企業との連携、口コミなどを通じて幅広く発信しています。また、日本企業や関連団体にも積極的に情報共有を行っています。

13. この祭りには、多くのボランティアが集まるのでしょうか？例年、平均して何名ほどのボランティアが手伝いに訪れるのでしょうか？また、ボランティアの層は幅広いのでしょうか？（年齢、アメリカ人、日系アメリカ人、および日本人）

ミッシェル：実のところ、私たちは常にボランティア不足の状態です。しかし、参加してくださる方々は非常に熱心で、一生懸命活動してくださっています。JAAIの理事会メンバー、桜祭りの実行委員会のメンバー、そのほかのボランティアを含めると、全体でおよそ80名ほどになります。私たちとしては、毎年100名程度のボランティアを確保したいと考えています。年齢層については、PFWの規定により、ボランティアは18歳以上でなければなりません。そのため、最も多いのは18歳から25歳の若い世代です。一方で、毎年決まった役割を担当し、その活動を楽しみにしている年配のボランティアの方々もいらっしゃいます。この祭りは、そうした若い世代が自らのアジア系としてのルーツや文化に誇りを持つ機会にもなっています。ボランティア全体としては、必ずしもアジア系の方が多数派というわけではありません。しかし、アジア系アメリカ人の若いボランティアは多く、日本系だけでなく、ビルマ系、華人系、フィリピン系、タイ系など、さまざまな背景を持つ方々が参加しています。この祭りは、そうした若い世代が自らのアジア系としてのルーツや文化に誇りを持つ機会にもなっています。また、ボランティアはフォートウェイン周辺だけでなく、インディアナ州内のさまざまな地域から集まります。昨年はカーメルから参加した方々もあり、フォートウェインの祭りの運営方法を見学し、その経験やアイデアをカーメルの祭りの企画・運営に生かしたいと考えていました。

Mitsuhiro: "Yes, the festival is supported by a large number of volunteers. Each year, approximately 80 volunteers participate, including Japanese, Americans, and Japanese-Americans, reflecting a wide range of backgrounds. The age range is also quite broad, and this diversity, along with a strong sense of community, is one of the defining features of the event."

三博：はい、多くのボランティアに支えられています。例年80名程度のボランティアが参加しており、日本人、アメリカ人、日系アメリカ人と多様なバックグラウンドの方々が協力しています。年齢層も幅広く、地域のつながりを感じられる点もこのイベントの特徴です。

*Photo from City of Carmel,
Indiana YouTube channel*



As a student learning Japanese and wanting to explore these festivals firsthand, interviewing with Michele and Mitsuhiro helped me understand how much dedication and community effort goes into keeping these traditions alive in Indiana. Hearing their perspectives showed me that these events are not just celebrations, but meaningful spaces where culture, connection, and pride can grow. I hope readers come away with a deeper appreciation for the people who make these festivals possible and for the cultural bridges they continue to build.

日本語を学ぶ学生として、また実際にこれらの祭りについて知りたいという思いから、ミシェルさんと三博さんにインタビューを行いました。このインタビューを通して、インディアナでこうした伝統を守り続けるために、どれほど多くの努力と地域の支えが注がれているのかを深く知ることができました。お二人のお話を伺い、これらの祭りは単なるお祝いではなく、文化や人とのつながり、そして自らのルーツへの誇りを育む大切な場であることを実感しました。この記事を通して、祭りを支える方々への理解と感謝、そして彼らが築き続けている文化の架け橋について、読者の皆さんにもより深く感じていただければ幸いです。

Yamate Gakuin High School Visit – April 10-24, 2026

Twenty-eight students from Yamate Gakuin High School in Yokohama visited Carroll High School from April 10th until April 24th. The students stayed with host families and followed their host students to their classes each day. The students were able to attend Carroll's prom and participate in several excursions, which included Crazy Pinz, Coney Island, a tour of DeBrand Chocolate, Glenbrook Mall, and a Tin Caps game. The partnership with Yamate Gakuin allows Japanese language students at Carroll High School to travel to Japan for two weeks during the summer and stay with host families. Eleven students from Carroll will leave on July 17th and return on August 1st. We are so fortunate to be able to participate in this exchange with Yamate Gakuin High School.

- Review and photos by Laura Semba



1

1-Meeting host families



2

2 – Playing game at school



3

3 – Fun at Crazy Pinz



4

4- Prom night



5

5 – Culture night at Carroll HS group photo



6

6 – Farewells to new friends



Asian American & Pacific Islander Heritage Month was celebrated as Heritage Fest at Purdue Fort Wayne on **April 22** on the Alumni Plaza by Walb Student Union. JAAI was one of 10-12 organizations supporting students of various Asian heritages. Terry O'Brien, Carol Wilhems and Michele Yamanaka provided information about the May Cherry Blossom Festival, JAAI and the Nippon Quarterly. Carol had made many origami cranes which she gave away to those who wanted one.



WINNING ANIME DESIGNS FOR 2027 CBF PUBLICITY



Artist: Avia Phangsri



Artist: Kait Jones

**Thank You to our Generous Sponsors
for the May 17, 2026 Fort Wayne Cherry Blossom Festival**



Indiana McDonald's Owner Operators

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Media Partner



Printing donated by



Poster, flyer & program
 designed by Tina Nakata

Event Partners



WINNING HAIKU POEMS - FORT WAYNE CHERRY BLOSSOM FESTIVAL MAY 17, 2026

How the Haiku poems were judged:

A rubric was established to use for judging so that all judges had the same criteria and values. Each Haiku was judged on its own merits and not in competition with others. Set points were awarded for each item in the rubric and any poem with a total of a certain number of points received the corresponding award. Thus, there could be multiple winners for 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, etc. if each had the accumulated points. It was also possible for no winners to be awarded a prize (example, 4th place) if no entry was in the point range for that prize award.

Elementary School

1st Prize – **Ayrion Williams**
School: Forest Park-5th grade
Teacher: Mrs. Stinson

BEST MOM EVER
My Mom can be strict
But she works so hard for us.
She Is truly the best.

2nd Prize – **Jasmine Ortiz**
School: Woodlan-5th grade
Teacher: Jillian DePew

A bird on a branch
had a worm in its small beak
And he ate it FAST!

3rd Prize – **Jason Graber**
School: Woodlan-4th grade
Teacher: Jillian Depew

When I think of spring?
Rhythm of a thunderstorm.
It is LOUD! And WET!

Middle School - No 2nd or 3rd prize awards.

1st Prize – **Helvy Ortiz Lemus**
School: Woodlan Jr./Sr. High-7th grade
Teacher: Jillian DePew

Seed beneath the ground
Sprouts through the soil and whispers,
Hello, World! Let's rise!"

High School

1st Prize – **Yaire Guizar Villa**
School: Woodlan Jr./Sr. High-9th grade
Teacher: Jillian DePew

Fishing with Grandpa.
Shine of blue in the water.
A seagull caught it!

2nd Prize – **Jenna Jones**
School: Carroll High-9th grade

Lost inside this song
I am as wide and weightless
as the summer sky

3rd Prize – **Heidi Rosentrader**
School: Carroll High-9th grade
Teacher: Mrs. Lamont

The bright sun rises
Pages shift, a quiet sigh
The world is a book

3rd Prize – **Charlie Molenhouse**
School: Carroll High-9th grade
Teacher: Kennedy/Lamont

Who am I, and why
I am me, having fun, free
I am me, complete

5th Prize – **Frankie Souder**
School: Carroll High-9th grade
Teacher: Ms. Webster

Make a map for me
Where nobody else travels
Alone in the wind

5th Prize – **Aaron Brown**
School: Carroll High-9th grade
Teacher: Kennedy/Lamont

In the dark blue depths.
You feel a haunting presence,
Swivel, a slight fish

5th Prize – Valeria Henriquez Gonzalez School: Woodlan Jr./Sr. High-9th grade Teacher: Jillian DePew The cherry blossoms ride on the wind, and with them remain memories	5th Prize – Lady Villagran Lemus School: Woodlan Jr./Sr. High-11th grade Teacher: Jillian DePew I tend the green field as a new, blooming flower in a broken world	5th Prize – Adrian Gavina School: Woodlan Jr./Sr. High-10th grade Teacher: Jillian DePew Fascinating peaks: snow drifts down, melting away all my depression
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University/community/college		
1st Prize – Korah Farley School: Indiana Institute of Technology College Senior The fly sits peaceful the frog doesn't have the heart they sit together	2nd Prize – Solstice School: Univ. Of Illinois-Chicago College Adult City lights, skyline Hidden shooting star above I still wish for you	3rd Prize – Khidany Ruiz Teacher: Izumi Harris College Senior Space and stars reflect Petals fall on the river Perfect place to dive
3rd Prize – Ty K School: IUI College Junior Wet Gloomy Grey sky The Rush of Morning Traffic A Sudden Loud Crash!		

Japanese: elementary-middle-high school, Univ. community college		
1st Prize – Max Kawasaki Sutterfield School: Avon High – 10th grade 桜散る 人も散りえど 記憶の中	2nd Prize – Aoba Ishii School: Shelbyville Middle – 6th grade 念願の 袴を着れた 卒業式	3rd Prize – Maya Kawasaki Sutterfield School: Avon Middle School West – 7th grade 桜咲く それより団子 さくらもち

On Site at festival		
1st Prize – Quill Berry I love the princess She's not allowed to love back I will wait for her	1st Prize – Haven Smith Zip zap, off it goes! Red, Green with a long bird's beak A hummingbird, sweet!	1st Prize – Joyce Racine Sunlight is dancing On the leaves of wind blown trees Silence is speaking

1st Prize – **Ashley Donahue**

Genuine, unveiled
The authentic me comes out
The mask falls away

5th Prize – **Jeremy Nally**

Indifferent son
Writing Haiku confusing
Constraints help make art

Honorable Mention – **Allison Edmond**

Poem not available

Special Family Award – **Logan
Nicola/the Nicola Family**

Poem not available

Honorable mention – **Max & Lauron
Max**

Dragon ate today
of course, that's what it does
best
burp of fiery breath



*Kathy Curtis giving Max his
award
-photo by Kathy Curtis*

COMING EVENTS

-24

JAPANESE COMPANY GOLF OUTING – AUGUST 9

Where: Autumn ridge Golf Course
11420 Auburn Rd., Fort Wayne IN 46845

Tee time: 8:00am.



If you are interested in playing golf, please contact:

Tetsuya Yoshida at Nishikawa Cooper LLC / tyosh140@niscoseals.com

Nobuhiro Morioka at Nishikawa Cooper LLC / nmorioka@niscoseals.com

JAPANESE SUMMER FESTIVAL – July 18 and July 19

A celebration of traditional cultural arts

Location: Anderson Japanese Gardens
318 Spring Creek Road
Rockford, IL 61107



See highlights of the festival on Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WXavBRzVOwM>

There will be 3 stages for performances. Fort Wayne's Spirit Bomb will be performing as well as the Chicago Koto Group, Kyudo and Iaido demonstrations, taiko groups, and much more.

There will also be activity stations providing demonstrations or hands-on experience with Ikebana, taiko drumming, anime drawing, Japanese paper-making, origami and others.

There is a fee for garden entrance, food, and some workshops but performances are free.

Complete information: <https://andersongardens.org/japanese-summer-festival/>

ANDERSON JAPANESE GARDENS
318 Spring Creek Road
Rockford, IL 61107



IKEBANA IN THE GARDENS

Classes are now available for both beginners (Introduction to Ikebana) and those looking to continue to develop their skills (Continuing Ikebana).

Introduction to Ikebana:

Aug. 19, 2 pm

Cost: \$58 Members | \$68 Non-Members per class.

Includes flower materials, vase, & anchoring Mechanism.

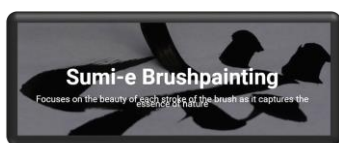
Continuing Ikebana:

Aug. 19, 4:30 pm

Cost: \$48 Members | \$58 Non-Members per class.

Includes flower materials only.

Space is limited and registration is required. Cancellation deadline is 1 week prior to the class. After that, registration is non-refundable. To Register: <https://andersongardens.org/ikebana-in-the-gardens/>



2026 Small-Group Sumi-e Class with Sumi-e Artist, Stella Dobbins, NWS

July 15 or Aug. 12, 1:00 PM – 4:00 PM | All classes are held under the Pavilion within the Gardens.
\$50.00 per adult per class, minimum class size is four students. *(Classes suitable for high school-age students to adults.)*

This 2026 Small Group Sumi-E Class (four to ten students) is held at the Beautiful Anderson Japanese Gardens. You will learn the art of Sumi-E brush painting with your friends, family, and colleagues. This class is for beginners to experienced participants. In the Sumi-E class, you will learn different Asian painting techniques and calligraphy to paint the subjects you and your group members choose in advance of the class.

Students must bring to class: ***Preferred supplies for the best Sumi-e experience*** – Sumi-e Ink, rice paper, Asian brushes (at least one medium), tube paints & palette, felt to put under paper, water cups & paper weight (example: small rocks).

A supply kit may be purchased for \$30 – *The kit includes (a variety packet of rice paper, two brushes, Sumi-e ink, palette, felt, a water vessel, watercolor tube paints, and a rock paperweight). If you have additional questions, feel free to reach out to the instructor Stella Dobbins: at Stelladobbins@yahoo.com*

Advanced Registration is required and class size is limited.

-All information is from the Anderson Japanese Gardens website.

To pick your subject or to register: <https://andersongardens.org/cultural-educational/sumi-e-brushpainting/>

September 13 -Japanese American Community Picnic

-26

Time: 2 pm to 6 pm

Where: Japanese Pavilion, Swinney Park West in Fort Wayne

- Bring Japanese food to share
- JAAI will provide tableware, water and some sushi.
- Enjoy group games, sno-cones, friendships

If your company wants to provide some special food for the community, please contact Michele (yamanakam@cs.com).

This is a good way to connect with the Japanese community and your contribution will be publicly recognized.

Please ask questions or RSVP by Sept. 9 to:

Japanese- ayanodayo@hotmail.com

English - yamanakam@cs.com



If you are not able to bring food to share, we will ask a donation:

Student: \$5

Individual: \$10

Family: \$25



YOKAI PARADE

OCT. 17



Every country has its own ideas of monsters or supernatural creatures that lurk, haunt, and terrorize. In Japan, many of these creatures are collectively referred to as “Yokai”. Some are dangerous, some humorous, and some friendly. There is an endless number of yokai that have persisted throughout time in the culture and history of Japan.

One famous example is the Kappa, which resembles a mix between a human and a turtle. These creatures were often depicted as dangerous and even deadly; however, today, they are viewed differently. The Kappa’s defining feature is the “dish” on its head, which holds water. If this water is spilled, it is said that the Kappa will become weakened. Additionally, it is believed that Kappa enjoy sumo wrestling, and that their favorite food is cucumber. These facts have led to an almost comical view of the Kappa, as more of a trickster than a threat.

Just as the Kappa varies in its depictions, Yokai can range from objects to animals and even spirits. The Yokai Parade is a celebration of this unique cultural staple whose stories have been passed on for hundreds of years.

-Nigella Shearer

DETAILS

You are invited to join the Yokai Parade!

* Date: October 17th

* Time: Meet-and-greet at 6:00 PM, followed by the parade at 7:00 PM in downtown Fort Wayne.

*Sponsored by TekVenture Makerspace

* Workshops: We will be hosting two costume-making workshops in August and September. The exact dates are still TBD, but we will add them to the Facebook event page and our flyers as soon as they are finalized.



NOT SURE WHAT YOKAI ARE?

What Yōkai Are/Aren't

Yōkai, 妖怪, are strange, supernatural creatures and phenomena from Japanese folklore. The word is a combination of the characters 妖 (yō—attractive, bewitching, calamity) and 怪 (kai—mystery, wonder).

Over the years, many different English words have been used as translations. Yōkai can be translated as *monster, demon, spirit, or goblin*, but it encompasses all of that and more. The world of yōkai also includes ghosts, gods, transformed humans and animals, spirit possession, urban legends, and other strange phenomena. It is a broad and vague term, and nothing exists in the English language that quite describes it. Yōkai is one of those words—like samurai, geisha, ninja, and sushi—that is best left in its native tongue.

One of the most difficult things to define are the boundaries of what constitutes a yōkai, and what isn't a yōkai. Even in Japanese, the term is difficult to pin down. Over the many eras of Japan's history, different words have been used as catch-all terms for the supernatural forces of this world; *bakemono, obake, mononoke, kiai, oni*. Depending on who you're talking to, specific creatures may or may not be classified as yokai. Are ghosts yōkai? Are oni yōkai? Can good spirits be yōkai or are they only evil spirits? Are kami yōkai? Does yōkai only apply to Japan, or does it apply to all countries? Every rule has an exception, and every answer has a contradiction.

The broadest possible definition of yōkai includes all supernatural creatures and phenomena from all parts of the world. Essentially, everything supernatural everywhere. I prefer to use a broad brush when defining yōkai, but not that broad. In my books and on this site, *yōkai* refers to all supernatural creatures and phenomena which are found in Japanese folklore. My definition is limited specifically to Japanese folklore for two reasons: because *yōkai* is a Japanese word, and because there already is an English word which describes everything supernatural from everywhere—*supernatural*. But aside from restricting the definition to Japanese folklore, I prefer to define *yōkai* with as broad a brush as possible.

FROM <https://yokai.com/introduction/> (This site also has a history of Yokai).

Here is another link about Yokai from the Museum of International Folk Art:

<https://yokai.moifa.org/#/> (online exhibition)

If you prefer to watch and listen, here are links to two Youtube videos on Yokai:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KgU5gZ7KFCE>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1O8tAol1OI0>

-The above information and links are courtesy of Carol Wilhems, who researched the subject.

DID YOU KNOW?

JAAI has its own YouTube channel!

See <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCeCrgDgZsW4wXlgtDcM4qJA/featured>



JAAI: Japanese American Association of Indiana
 @jaai7420 • 24 subscribers • 54 videos
 More about this channel ...more
 Subscribed

[Home](#)
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For You



Chicago Okinawa Kenjinkai 2 of 2 (2024 Fort Wayne Cherry Blossom Festival)
174 views • 1 year ago



Taiko Drumming - Fort Wayne Taiko and KaDON Ensemble 1 (2025 Fort Wayne Cherry Blossom Festival)
38 views • 5 months ago



Chicago Okinawa Kenjinkai (2025 Fort Wayne Cherry Blossom Festival)
86 views • 5 months ago



Chicago Okinawa Kenjinkai 1 of 2 (2025 Fort Wayne Cherry Blossom Festival)
130 views • 1 year ago

Videos



Chicago Okinawa Kenjinkai (2025 Fort Wayne Cherry Blossom Festival)
86 views • 5 months ago



Fort Wayne Taiko and KaDON Ensemble 2 (2025 Fort Wayne Cherry Blossom Festival)
78 views • 5 months ago



Japan Karate Do Genbukai (2025 Fort Wayne Cherry Blossom Festival)
14 views • 5 months ago



Taiko Drumming (2025 Fort Wayne Cherry Blossom Festival)
31 views • 5 months ago



Taiko Drumming - Fort Wayne Taiko and KaDON Ensemble (2025 Fort Wayne Cherry Blossom Festival)
38 views • 5 months ago



Kendama Demonstration (2025 Fort Wayne Cherry Blossom Festival)
11 views • 5 months ago

Currently it has videos from the 2024 and 2025 fort Wayne Cherry Blossom Festivals. 2026 videos will be added soon.

Please take a look and SUBSCRIBE!

PEOPLE

GOOD-BYE:

Tomonari Nakamura -FCC (Adams)
Isaac & Jitsuko Larrison

Please email me with your news so I can share it. Company achievements and recognitions are also welcome.

Submissions should be emailed to yamanakam@cs.com, with "People" in the subject line. They will be included in the next quarterly newsletter. Categories are:

- Welcome (new to the area)
- Good-bye (leaving area)
- Births/deaths
- Marriage
- Special awards or accomplishments

If you are submitting information about someone else, be sure to have their permission.

This is a community newsletter. We need your input for it to be useful.

掲載ご希望の方は、件名を"People"とし yamanakam@cs.com までメールを下さい。次号のニュースレターへ掲載します。以下のカテゴリでお願い致します。

- ようこそ（このエリアに新しく来られた方）
- さようなら（このエリアから離れる方）
- 誕生 / 訃報
- ご結婚
- 特別賞または功績

情報をご提供される場合には、ご本人に掲載の同意を得たうえでご提供くださいますよう、お願い致します。

本新聞は地域のニュースレターです。ご意見・ご感想・情報があればぜひお聞かせください。

NIPPON QUARTERLY

Everything Japanese in the Fort Wayne Area

Editor – Michele Yamanaka

yamanakam@cs.com

ニッポン・クォーターリー

～フォートウェインエリアの日本の全て～

編集ーミッシェル・ヤマナカ

yamanakam@cs.com

Contributing authors for this issue / 寄稿者（敬称略）:

- The Making of a Kendama Master: Tsugawa Interview – M. Yamanaka
 - Galentine's Day – Mark Kennedy
 - Japanese Culture in Bloom – Evan Seid
 - Yamate Gakuin Visit – Laura Semba
 - Yokai Parade – Nigella Shearer
- More on Yokai – Researched by Carol wilhems

Thank you for translation help: Hailey Jalovecky, Carmella Pittman, Dr. Reiko Ileleji, Reon Adachi, Karina Stolz, & Evan Seid (Ball State Students and faculty)

Deadline for articles to be submitted	Publication date
December 31	Mid January
March 31	Mid April
June 30	Mid July
September 30	Mid October

We hope to have reports/articles from all segments of the Japanese – American community in order to connect us for good communication, provide better cultural understanding, and support each other.

The format of this newsletter is still developing. We welcome suggestions.

If you learn of cultural events of interest to the Japanese community, e.g., a Japanese language movie, an Ikebana workshop, a Japanese dance performance, etc., please email Michele so they can be included in the next newsletter.

If you do not want to receive this newsletter, please email Michele Yamanaka to remove your name from our email list.

記事提出の期限	発行日
12月31日	翌1月中旬
3月31日	4月中旬
6月30日	7月中旬
9月30日	10月中旬

JAAI は日本とアメリカと相互の文化を幅広く日米のコミュニティーへ広める為、様々なレポートや記事の提供をお願いしております。

また本新聞につきましては、改善を心掛けて行きますので、ご提案やアイデアなどありましたら是非ご連絡下さい。

また、もし日本に関するイベントなどがありましたら、次号へ掲載しますのでミッシェルまでご連絡を宜しくお願い致します。

今後配信をご希望されない方は、お手数ですがミッシェルまでご連絡を宜しくお願い申し上げます。

**Golf putting winners
at 2026 Picnic**

