

旭川 ASAHIKAWA Info

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Hokkaido News Top 5



February 2015

Compiled by TAKADA Nobuhiro

December 12

- Niseko Tokyu Resort Co. Ltd., a company that owns Niseko Mt. Resort Grand Hirafu ski slopes, has unveiled plans to build a fancy condominium next to the ski site. The new high-end accommodation will have apartments where 300 tourists can stay. The construction is scheduled to begin in July 2015 and to be completed by December 2016. For the first time in about 20 years, Niseko is to see such a new large accommodation, though many small and medium-sized ones have been opening up.

December 20

- Japan's government and ruling party agreed to open up a new section of bullet train line between Hakodate and Sapporo in 2030, five years earlier than originally planned. The government and LDP said that they can see their way clear to secure a source of needed funding. Many believe that starting Hokkaido Shinkansen operation earlier will also help boost the economy in Hokkaido.

January 15

- "The Blue Pond" in Biei illuminated by LED has attracted about 6,000 visitors from December 20 to January 12, which has exceeded expectations. Over 15,000 visitors are to visit by the end of February when the lighting will be over. Even though the pond freezes in winter, tourist can still enjoy the beautiful Blue Pond now thanks to the illumination.

January 15

- A lottery stand in Asahikawa sold "The Year-End Jumbo Lottery" tickets, which grants 700 million yen to someone who bought the top winning ticket as well as the ones with numbers before and after the first prize. The stand is popularly known as the place to go, because countless winning tickets have been sold from the stand in the past. Even those from outside of Hokkaido come to buy tickets. The stand has sold 14 big prize tickets, which won more than 100 million yen for the last ten years.

January 15

- 20 restaurants, pubs, and ramen shops with menus in English, Chinese, and Korean started to display an "Omotenashi Seal." The hospitality seal has an image of the mascot of Asahikawa City, "Asappi," wearing a toque blanche. Each store with foreign language menus also displays a small seal showing a language in which the menus are written.



**ASAHIKAWA
INTERNATIONAL
COMMITTEE**

For further information or to register for events contact:

Asahikawa International Committee (SASAKI Mai, Kim LACEY, or SAITO Emmy)

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International/City Affairs Division, Comprehensive Policy Dept.

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Special Thanks to KAWAI Tatsuo, Proofreader & Advisor

Everyone Can Be an Artist: Sheep Exhibition**誰でもアーティスト ひつじ展**

Every year Gallery PuruPuru hosts an exhibition with an animal theme for the year's Chinese Zodiac. And this year's exhibition is on sheep, of course. Not all the displayed works are from professional artists, as the exhibition is open for submissions from everyone who is an artist at heart. Each visitor can vote for his/her favorite piece(s), and an award ceremony will take place at the next exhibition. Be sure to look for an epic sheep from a famous children's book illustrator, Hiroshi ABE.

Date: now to February 21st (Saturday), except on Mondays and Tuesdays**Time:** 10:00 am to 6:00 pm**Venue:** Gallery PuruPuru of Kawauso Club Office (7-jo 8-chome)**Admission:** Free**For Further Information Contact:** 0166-73-8289 or email purupuru@snow.plala.or.jp**A Body of Sensation****感じるからだ**

Many artists find the human body as an abundant source of inspiration. At this special exhibition, viewers will be able to see the final products in which the artists explore the use of their hands, wrists, and even fingertips. One of the purposes of these artworks is to appreciate and be conscious of our bodies. This exhibition is full of unusual and interesting artworks that were inspired by the human body and its movements.

Date: now to March 8th (Sunday), except on Mondays**Time:** 9:30 am to 5:00 pm (admission is until 4:30 pm)**Venue:** Hokkaido Asahikawa Museum of Art (inside Tokiwa Park)**Admission:** General—¥510, High School Students—¥300, Senior Citizens (65+) and Children—Free**For Further Information Contact:** 0166-25-2577 (Hokkaido Asahikawa Museum of Art)**Rynten OKAZAKI's Guitar Concert****岡崎倫典 ギター・コンサート**

Rynten OKAZAKI is a guitarist from Hiroshima known for his "fingerstyle," which is a technique of playing the guitar by plucking the strings directly, as opposed to flatpicking. OKAZAKI plays a chord and melody simultaneously, giving an advanced feeling of depth to the song. Most of his songs are composed by himself, some of which you might recognize from a few animated movies, including Ghibli Studio's "My Neighbor Totoro."

Date: February 1st (Sunday)**Time:** Doors 2:00 pm, Show 2:30 pm**Venue:** Asahikawa Taisetsu Crystal Hall (Kagura 3-jo 7-chome)**Admission:** General—¥2,000, Senior Citizens (65 and older) and disabled—¥1,500, Students—¥1,000**For Further Information Contact:** 0166-69-2000 (Asahikawa Taisetsu Crystal Hall)**Sound's Fragment and Ripple Concert & Workshop on Impromptu****音のかけらと波紋音のコンサート&即興演奏のワークショップ**

A percussionist and impromptu musician, Sachiko NAGATA, will be leading this special concert and workshop. NAGATA will be playing the slit drum made of iron, which is also used at the current exhibition "Fragments of Sound N5" in *A Body of Sensation*. Participants will also get a chance to play the drum afterwards.

Date: February 7th (Saturday)**Time:** 2:00 pm to 4:00 pm**Venue:** Exhibition Room 1 in Hokkaido Asahikawa Museum of Art**Admission:** General—¥510, High School Students—¥300, Senior Citizens (65+) and Children—Free**For Further Information Contact:** 0166-25-2577 (Hokkaido Asahikawa Museum of Art)

The 28th Asahikawa Commercial High School Wind Band Regular Concert

旭川商業高等学校吹奏楽部 第28回旭川定期演奏会

Asahikawa Commercial High School's wind band is holding their 28th Regular Concert on the first weekend of this month. Come and show your support to these talented student musicians for their time and effort.

Date: February 7th (Saturday) & 8th (Sunday)

Time: February 7th—Doors 4:30 pm, Show 5:00 pm, February 8th—Doors 12:30 pm, Show 1:00 pm

Venue: Asahikawa Civic Culture Hall (7-jo 9-chome)

Admission: S Seats: ¥1,000, A Seats: ¥1,500, Non-Reserved Seats: ¥1,000 (¥500 for High School Students and Under)

Ticket Offices: Lawson Ticket (L-code: 12273), Yamaha Music Retailing Asahikawa



Ultra Double Stage ~Earth & Universe~

ウルトラダブルステージ ~Earth & Universe~

Ultraman is the main character for this year's Asahikawa Winter Festival. In case you didn't know, Ultraman became a major pop culture phenomenon in Japan since it first aired on TV in 1966. The show's success spawned dozens of sequels, spin-offs, parodies, and remakes. This stage will be divided into two parts where each introduces a legendary story. At the entrance, you can take a picture with a human-sized Ultraman character, look at displayed goods, and buy limited edition Ultraman products.

Date: February 11th (Wednesday, national holiday)

Time: Morning Stage—Doors 9:30 am, Show 10:00 am

Afternoon Stage—Doors 1:30 pm, Show 2:00 am

Venue: Asahikawa Civic Culture Hall (7-jo 9-chome)

Admission: Advanced Tickets: ¥2,600, At Door: ¥2,900, Free for children under 3

Ticket Offices: 7-Eleven Ticket (Seven code: 033-917), Lawson Ticket (L-code: 12518), Yoshida Toy Store, Asahikawa Civic Culture Hall Ticket Office, Asahikawa Museum Shop, Taisetsu Crystal Hall Ticket Office, Gyokkodo Asahikawa, B. Brown Coffee



Rakuchou TATEKAWA's Health Stage

立川らく朝 健康高座

Rakuchou TATEKAWA is a physician in internal medicine who believes that laughter is the best medicine. So on top of practicing medicine, TATEKAWA debuted as a rakugo story teller at the age of 46. Now he goes around Japan to spread laughter and health by rakugo.

Date: February 13th (Friday)

Time: Doors 6:00 pm, Show 6:30 pm

Venue: Asahikawa Grand Hotel (6-jo-dori 9-chome)

Admission: All seats—¥2,000

Ticket Offices: Gyokkodo Feeeal Asahikawa, Fukido (Suehiro, Toyooka, Minami 6-jo-dori), Moriyama Hospital, FM Riviere



Dance of the Famous Tune

名曲の舞

A flutist and a ballerina from Asahikawa will be doing a wonderful collaboration of classical music and ballet. The concert will be divided into two parts, and the latter half will feature a popular segment from Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky's "The Nutcracker."

Date: February 17th (Tuesday)

Time: Doors 6:00 pm, Show 6:30 am

Venue: Asahikawa Taisetsu Crystal Hall (Kagura 3-jo 7-chome)

Admission: General—¥3,000, Senior Citizens (65 and older) and disabled—¥2,500, Students—¥1,500

Ticket Offices: Kawai Asahikawa Shop, Gyokkodo Feeeal Asahikawa, Yamaha Music Retailing Asahikawa, Civic Culture Hall Ticket Office, Taisetsu Crystal Hall Ticket Office



EVENTS IN ASAHIKAWA FOR FEBRUARY

The History of the Holidays

Valentine's Day By Kim LACEY

There is no doubt about it; Valentine's Day is one of America's most popular holidays. More than 62% of Americans celebrate by sending greeting cards and flowers, giving candy or other gifts, enjoying romantic dinners, or all three. But the history behind Valentine's Day turns out to be somewhat surprising.

For example, the roots of Valentine's Day go all the way back to an ancient Roman fertility festival held in mid-February called Lupercalia. Later, the Christian Church chose mid-February for St. Valentine's Day in order to Christianize the celebration.

But who was Saint Valentine? Not much is known about the holiday's namesake. First of all, there was more than just one Christian cleric named Valentine. One of them was sentenced to death for performing marriage ceremonies in secret after Emperor Claudius II banned marriage for young Roman men, thinking single men made better soldiers. Pope Gelasius declared February 14 as a day for honoring the soft-hearted Valentine at the end of the 5th century.

It wasn't until the 1300s though, that the holiday became definitively associated with love and romance. Back then people believed that February 14th was also the beginning of birds' mating season. The first written Valentine greetings appeared in the 15th century. And by the 17th century, people in Great Britain had begun a tradition of exchanging Valentine's Day cards or letters.

Valentine's Day soon caught on in the U.S. as well. The first mass-produced holiday cards emerged in the 1840s, and Valentine's Day soon exploded into a major consumer holiday. Today, an estimated one billion Valentine cards are sent each year. (More than on any other holiday, except for Christmas.) More than 35 million heart-shaped boxes of chocolate are sold, and more than 220 million roses are produced for the holiday in a typical year. All together, Americans spend almost 20 billion dollars on Valentine's Day, or an average of some \$130/person per year.

While the most popular gifts were candy and flowers, nearly 20% of Americans splurge on jewelry, spending as much as 4 billion dollars annually. And those who prefer the ultimate romantic gesture are definitely not alone. A recent survey revealed that as many as 6 million couples are likely to get engaged on February 14th, continuing a long and romantic history.





Hello Asahikawa!

Name: Samantha Whitley
Hometown: Hartlepool, England
Interviewed: January 13th, 2014 by AIC

AIC: *How long have you been in Asahikawa? What do you do here?*

Sam: I arrived in Asahikawa at the beginning of August last year. I am an ALT in high schools in Asahikawa and the Kamikawa district.

AIC: *What brought you to Japan?*

Sam: I wanted a change of pace. I had finished university and decided to do an English teaching certificate and met lots of amazing people from all over the world and realized that it was possible to go anywhere. I decided on Japan because, for me, it was a huge challenge. I don't speak Japanese and the culture is quite different from England.

AIC: *Where are you from? Could you describe your hometown for us?*

Sam: I'm from a seaside town in the North East of England called Hartlepool. It has around 90,000 people and is quite an old town. It was first established in 600 A.D.. The area I am from is quite industrial. There are lots of factories, so it isn't the best place to visit as a tourist but it feels like home to me.

AIC: *Wow, quite a historic town, it seems. By the way, what was your first impression of Hokkaido?*

Sam: I loved it. Everyone is so friendly to me even though they don't know me and I can hardly speak any Japanese (although I do try!). Aside from the lovely people, I thought that Hokkaido was the most beautiful place I'd ever seen. The mountains are breathtaking and the cities are vibrant and modern.

AIC: *Did you get to travel a little? Where did you enjoy the most so far?*

Sam: I have been making an effort to see as much of Hokkaido as possible. I'll try to remember most of the places I've been: Sapporo, Hakodate, Lake Shikotsu, Otaru, Wakkanai, Obihiro, Kitami, Nayoro, Mombetsu, Lake Akan, Sounkyo, Biei, and Furano. I have no favorite. I love everywhere I've been!

AIC: *It gets quite cold and snowy in Asahikawa. Are you doing alright?*

Sam: Actually, I love winter, so I'm enjoying the snow and the cold very much.



A view of Hartlepool Town Wall. (source:en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hartlepool)

Hello Asahikawa!

Samantha Whitley Interview (Part 2) Continued from Page 5

AIC: *What are some ups and downs of your work as an ALT in Japan?*

Sam: There are many more ups than downs. Some of the ups include working with the students. They work extremely hard and are the sweetest people I've ever met. Also, I can study Japanese and learn more about Japanese culture and life every day—I love it. The only hard thing about working here in Japan is that sometimes I find it hard to understand situations when they are in Japanese. I am finding these situations getting less and less frequent because I study hard and people are always willing to help when they do occur.



AIC: *Glad you are doing great. What do you do in your free time here in Asahikawa?*

Sam: I love to go rock climbing. There are two rock climbing gyms in Asahikawa (I'm very lucky) so I do that in all seasons. In summer, I could go rock climbing outdoors because Hokkaido has perfect conditions. In winter I have been going snowboarding—another upside living in Hokkaido.

AIC: *What do you miss most about home and how do you get over sickness?*

Sam: I sometimes miss the food. It's not usually any particular kind of food. I think it's the familiarity I miss. If I'm given a plate of food in the UK, I usually know what it's made of but not in Japan! I'm definitely getting used to it though. As for homesickness, I actually never felt homesick. I felt at home in Asahikawa very quickly, so I feel very lucky.

AIC: *Just out of curiosity, what is your favorite Japanese word or phrase?*

Sam: Mmmm, I really like *ときどき* because of how it sounds but I think my favorite Japanese word for the meaning is *がんばる*. We use this a lot while climbing. It is a great motivating word.

AIC: *Is there any Japanese customs or practices that you just can't get used to?*

Sam: Hmm, I can't get used to saying *お先に失礼します* when I leave work or somewhere like that. I don't know why. I think it's a good custom but it's hard for me to get used to.

AIC: *Do you mind sharing your plans in Japan before returning home?*

Sam: I want to continue to explore as much of Hokkaido as possible, including Asahikawa.

AIC: *Sounds like a good plan! Lastly, what would you like to do in the future?*

Sam: At the moment, my goal is to stay here. I'm really enjoying my time here and I think I'd like to make Hokkaido my home, at least for the next few years.

AIC: *Thank you for taking your time for this interview.*

Sam: You are welcome.

★ *Movies ~ February* ★

*Every Wednesday is “Ladies’ Day.” Admission is ¥1,100 (tax included) for women at all theaters.

*<Dinos Cinemas Only> Every Thursday is “Men’s Day.” Admission is ¥1,100 (tax included) for men.

*The 1st day of every month is “Movie Day” in Asahikawa. Admission (tax included) is ¥1,100 for Adults, ¥800 for Senior High School Students and Under at all theaters.

★ **Cineplex 7 Asahikawa:** Nagayama 12-jo 3-chome Western Powers Nagayama / ☎ 49 – 1000

URL: <http://www.kadokawa-cineplex.co.jp/asahikawa/> (Japanese)

Directions: Take Dohoku Bus No. 66, 72 or 665 at Bus stop No. 18 in front of Feeal Asahikawa (1-jo-dori 8-chome). Get off at “Nagayama 10 (ju)-jo 3 (san)-chome.”

Now Showing

- Exodus: Gods and Kings (English)
- Annie (English)
- Kamisama wa Bali ni iru (Japanese)
- Again 28 nemme no Koshien (Japanese)
- Taken3 (English)
- ST the Movie (Japanese)
- The November Man (English/R15+)
- Big Hero 6 (English)
- Vancouver no Asahi (Japanese)
- Kuragehime (Japanese)
- Yokai Watch the Movie (Japanese/Animation)
- Five Minutes to Tomorrow (Japanese)
- Aoharaido (Japanese)
- The Hobbit: The Battle of the Five Armies (English)
- Kiseiju (Japanese/PG12)
- Maestro! (Japanese)
- Joker Game (Japanese)

Coming Soon

- Mortdecai (English) 2/7
- Teenage Ninja Mutant Turtles (English) 2/8
- Fifty Shades of Grey (English/R15+) 2/13
- Muumit Rivieralla (Japanese/Animation) 2/13
- Terrace House Closing Door (Japanese) 2/14
- The Fault in Our Stars (English/PG12) 2/20
- American Sniper (English) 2/21
- Saihatenite (Japanese) 2/28
- Kuchibiru ni utawo (Japanese) 2/28

★ **Dinos Cinemas:** Taisetsu-dori 5-chome / ☎ 21 – 1218

URL: http://www.geodinos.jp/cinema/asa_schedule.php?StoreID=5 (Japanese)

Directions: Take Dohoku Bus No. 61, 62, 67 or 667 at Bus stop No. 18 in front of Feeal Asahikawa (1-jo-dori 8-chome). Get off at “Nippon Seishi Mae.”

Now Showing

- Exodus: Gods and Kings (English)
- Annie (English)
- Sin City: A Dame to Kill For (English/R15+)
- ST the Movie (Japanese)
- Taken3 (English)
- Yokai Watch the Movie (Japanese/Animation)
- Big Hero 6 (English)
- The Hobbit: The Battle of the Five Armies (English)
- Vancouver no Asahi (Japanese)
- Aoharaido (Japanese)
- The Last -NARUTO the Movie- (Japanese/Animation)
- Kiseiju (Japanese/PG12)

Coming Soon

- Mortdecai (English) 2/7
- Teenage Ninja Mutant Turtles (English) 2/8
- Fifty Shades of Grey (English/R15+) 2/13
- Itamuhito (Japanese/R-15) 2/14
- Otoko no Issho (Japanese)
- The Fault in Our Stars (English/PG12) 2/20
- American Sniper (English) 2/21
- KANO (English) 2/28

Asahikawa Winter Festival

The 56th Asahikawa Winter Festival is back this year, with continuous interest and support from the residents and tourists from around the globe. Fireworks, outdoor activities, delicious food, giant ice sculptures, laser shows and projection mapping are just some of the highlights of this year's festival. For more information in English, Chinese, and Korean, please stop by Asahikawa International Center or Asahikawa Tourist Information Center. You can also access the Winter Festival brochures in each language at: www.city.asahikawa.hokkaido.jp/files/kankou/awf/

Dates: February 6th (Fri.) to February 11th (Wed.)
Times: Varies, with many events throughout the day and night
Charge: Free
Main Venues: Asahibashi Bridge and Kaimono Koen Shopping Street

Snow Lights in the Zoo

Asahiyama Zoo will be open at night for just six days during the Winter Festival period, with the zoo lit up with ice candles. It will be fun to watch how animals behave in the stillness of the snow at night with your friends and family. Don't miss this rare opportunity to experience the zoo in a whole different way!

Dates: February 6th (Fri.) to February 11th (Wed.)
Times: 10:30 am to 7:30 pm (admission is until 7pm)

Venue: Asahiyama Zoo (Kuranuma, Higashi Asahikawa-cho)
How to get there: Take the Asahikawa Denki-kido Bus bound for Asahiyama Zoo from the bus stop #5 located in front of Asahikawa Station. (Takes approximately 40 minutes.)



Interesting activities, such as quizzes, discussions, songs, games, handcrafts and many more, all in English! Come meet new people, relax, and relate on Fun Fridays!

FUN FRIDAYS

Dates: February 13th&27th, March 13th&27th
 *Fun Fridays are held on every 2nd and 4th Friday
Time: 1:00-2:00pm & 7:00-8:00pm
Location: Asahikawa International Center, Common Meeting Room (1) (Feeeal Asahikawa 7F 1-jo-dori 8-chome)
Charge: ¥1,500 for 3 months (Free for volunteer leaders)

The AIC offers many services to make your life in Asahikawa more enjoyable. Here are just a few

Volunteer Guide: Volunteers are registered to help translate and interpret.

Event Volunteer: The AIC plans many exciting events throughout the year, such as Friendship Parties.

Homestay: Families are registered to welcome you into their homes for an overnight stay or just for an afternoon visit.



The Asahikawa International Center (Feeeal Asahikawa 7F 1-jo-dori 8-chome) has free wifi available for public use free of charge. Registration for a user card is needed, if you are residing in Asahikawa. Please feel free to come by anytime, as well as check out some of the other services and activities available at the Asahikawa International Center.

Spread the Word...

Contribute to the AIC newsletter and share any interesting information you may have with other readers. You may write on any topic including, items to buy or sell, offers for culture/language exchanges, or write an essay about your life in Asahikawa or your hometown. The article should not be profit related! Please send your submissions to us at the AIC.



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****The opinions expressed in the essays are those of the writers and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Asahikawa International Committee or the City of Asahikawa.****