

旭川 ASAHIKAWA Info

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Hokkaido News Top 5



March 2012

Compiled by TAKADA Nobuhiro

February 6

“Asahikawa Tourist Information Center” has opened next to JR Asahikawa Station. The center is in a two-story Asahikawa City building. Besides the information center, outlets offering local products, light meals, and a baggage room have also opened in the building.

February 7

“Yumepirika” and “Nanatsuboshi” are “Special A” rated grade of rice grown in Hokkaido. This rating is the top of the five-grade evaluation of rice quality in 2011. Other Hokkaido rice named “Kirara397” and “Hoshinoyume” are ranked “A,” the second best rating. Experts of the National Grain Evaluation Association had tested 129 kinds of rice all over Japan in terms of taste, flavor, and texture, in the overall evaluation process.

February 10

“Nishikagura Mumimura,” an agricultural production corporation in Asahikawa, held a local sake tasting session in New York City with the aim of promoting exports of locally-brewed sake. The boutique sake is named “Iki,” meaning chic, which is adjusted to suit American taste. The corporation plans to sell “Iki” on a trial basis in New York City from April.

February 14

The number of visitors to the 53rd Asahikawa Winter Festival was about 681,000, a 30% decrease from the previous year. It was also a 10 year record low turnout. The executive committee said it was mainly due to the festival being one day shorter than usual, and the unseasonal bad weather during the event.

February 20

A freight train belonging to Japan Freight Railway Company derailed in the yard of Higashioiwake Station, on the Sekisho Line which stretches from Sapporo to Obihiro. The train operator said that he tried to put the brake on the train about two kilometers short of the station but, it did not work. JR Sekisho Line has resumed operation on February 20th after removing the derailed trains.



For further information or to register for events contact:

Asahikawa International Committee
(SASAKI Mai, Sergej NESIC, or SAITO Emmy)

Location:

International Affairs Division, Civic and Community Services Dept.

Address:

Asahikawa International Center Feeeel
Asahikawa 7F, 1-jo-dori 8-chome, Asahikawa 070-0031

Tel: (0166) 25-7491

Fax: (0166) 23-4924

E-mail:

cir_kokusai@city.asahikawa.hokkaido.jp

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Special Thanks to KAWAI Tatsuo
Proofreader & Advisor

“VOYAGE THROUGH LANDSCAPE PAINTINGS” EXHIBITION

ヴォヤージュ風景の旅

An exhibition featuring a collection of brightly coloured oil paintings by a number of distinguished Japanese painters, depicting the diverse scenery of the northern landscape.

Date: Now to April 8th (Sunday)

Time: 9:30am~5:00pm (last entry 4:30pm) Museum is closed on Mondays.

Venue: Hokkaido Asahikawa Museum of Art (Tokiwaka Park)

Admission: General ¥500(* for groups of over 10 people ¥400) University & High School Students ¥300 (* ¥250, free on Saturdays) & Junior High School Students & Under, Pensioners, Disabled, & Persons with special needs Free.

Ticket Office: Hokkaido Asahikawa Museum of Art

For further information contact: 25-2577 (Hokkaido Asahikawa Museum of Art)



THE 45TH ANNUAL ASAHIKAWA YOUTH BRASS BAND CONCERT

第45回定期演奏会 旭川市青少年吹奏楽団

This program for this year's concert by this extraordinary ensemble will include a diverse range of genres, including music from "Hamlet," ballet music, AKB48 medley, David Bowie's "Let's Dance," a kid's medley, and much more. Keeping with concert's dance theme, the program will also include a special guest dance performance by TAKAHASHI Yutaka and MATSUSHITA Shino.

Date: March 11th (Sunday)

Time: Doors 2:30pm, Show 3:00pm

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

Admission: General ¥800, High School Students & Under ¥500

Ticket Office: Yamaha Music Asahikawa Store, Asahikawa Civic Culture Hall, Asahikawa Taistetsu Crystal Hall

For further information contact: 080-2873-7700 (HATAYAMA)



“KEMBAN DANSHI” PIANO DUET

鍵盤男子ピアノデュオコンサート

A concert by the talented two pianists of Japan's most popular opera group, "Legend," OI Ken and NAKAMURA Masahiro. The concert will be hosted by the Legend's leading member, YOSHIDA Tomoaki.

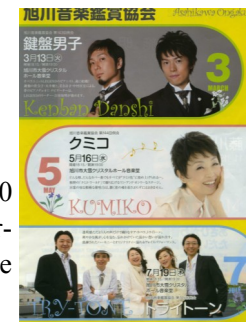
Date: March 13th (Tuesday)

Time: Doors 6:15pm, Show 7:00pm

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

Admission: Fee to join the society ¥2000 (Students ¥1000,) plus a monthly fee of ¥2,000 (Students ¥1000). To become a member you need to join as a group of three people, otherwise contact the society. Society members can attend five concerts a year organized by the Asahikawa Music Appreciation Society.)

For further information contact: 22-5367 (Asahikawa Music Appreciation Society)



“HISTORY OF MOTOWN” TOUR OF JAPAN 2012

ヒストリー・オブ・モータウン

A rare chance to see some of the legends of Motown right here in Asahikawa. From its humble beginnings in the late fifties Detroit, Motown (derived from Motor Town) had grown into one of the most influential record label and music genres of the 20th Century. It spawned such greats as The Jackson 5, Stevie Wonder, Diana Ross, The Temptations, and many more. Richard Street, lead singer of temptations is joined by the The Ladeez & TFO for this one and only Asahikawa show.

Date: March 8th (Thursday)

Time: Show 6:30pm

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

Admission: S-Seats ¥6,500, A-Tickets ¥6,000

Ticket Office: Lawson Ticket, Ticket Pia, Gyokkodo,

For further information contact: 69-2000 (TRUST Kikaku Create)



“CROKET” CONCERT

コロツケ コンサート

Crocket is the stage name of TAKIGAWA Hiroshi, one of Japan’s best known comic impressionists. He started his professional career in the mid-80’s after appearing on Nippon Television’s “*Owarai Star no Tanjo*” (A Comic Star is Born). He regularly appears on national TV and radio, including numerous TV commercials and dramas.

Date: March 15th (Thursday)

Time: Afternoon Show 2:30pm, Evening Show 6:30pm

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

Admission: S-Seats ¥5,500, A-Seats ¥5,000

Ticket Office: Gyokkodo, Lawson Ticket, Ticket Pia

For further information contact: 011-261-9991 (Trust KEIKAKU Create)



THE 16TH ANNUAL ASAHIKAWA RYOUN HIGH SCHOOL BRASS BAND REGULAR CONCERT

旭川凌雲高等学校吹奏楽団 第16回定期演奏会

Come and show your support for the Ryouun High School Brass band as they prepare for the 36th Annual All-Japan High School Cultural Festival in August. This year’s concert program will include “Six Sticks,” “River Dance,” “Turandot,” “Soran Bushi,” and many more.

Date: March 17th (Saturday,) March 18th (Sunday)

Time: March 17th Doors 5:00pm Show 5:30pm, March 18th Doors 1:00pm Show 1:30pm

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

Admission: General ¥1,000 (reserved tickets ¥1,500,) High School Students & Under ¥500

Ticket Office: Lawson Ticket, Asahikawa Civic Culture Hall, Yamaha Music Asahikawa Store, Coach & Four, Asahikawa Taisetsu Crystal Hall

For further information contact: 090-3776-7423 *9:00am thru 6:00pm



HELLO KITTY’S LOVELY STAGE

ハローキティのラブリーステージ

The first part of the show is titled “Daniel & Batsumaru’s Batcha Metcha Party” and will feature an audience interactive show and dance show. The second part of the show is titled “Musical Review Show” and will feature some of Sanrio’s most popular characters as they sing and dance while building the Candy House.

Date: March 27th (Tuesday)

Time: Afternoon Show 1:00pm, Evening Show 4:00pm

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

Admission: General ¥2,000, Two Year-Olds & Under Free (sharing seat with an adult)

Ticket Office: Lawson Ticket, Ticket Pia,

For further information and tickets contact: 011-214-5261 (UHB Office)



32nd VASALOPPET JAPAN

第32回バーサーロペット・ジャパン

This year’s Vasaloppet Japan Ski-walk events will be held for the first time at the brand new Kitasaito Course. Be part of this city’s biggest international sporting event!

Date: *Cross-country* March 10th (Saturday,) *Ski-walk & Team Sprint* March 11th (Sunday)

Time: *Cross-country* from 9:30pm, *Ski-walk & Sprint* from 10:00pm

Venue: Tomisawa Course & Kitasaito Course

Admission: **Tomisawa Course** *Cross-Country* - General ¥3,000, 70 Years-old & over ¥2,500, High School Students ¥2,000, Junior High School Students ¥1,500, Elementary School Students ¥700

Team Sprint - General (including High School Students) ¥3,000, Junior High & Elementary School Students ¥1,000

Kitasaito Course *Ski Walk* - General ¥2,500, 70 Years-old & over ¥1,500, High School Students ¥1,000, Junior High School Students ¥1,500, Elementary School Students & Infants Free

For further information and to register contact: 55-7783 (Asahikawa Amateur Sports Association,) or 23-1944 (Asahikawa City Sports Division)



EVENTS IN ASAHIKAWA FOR MARCH



Hello Asahikawa!

Name: James Stevenson
Hometown: Newcastle upon Tyne
Interviewed: 23rd February, 2012
By AIC

AIC: *What do you do here in Asahikawa?*

James: I work for EC/NOVA language school as an English language instructor. I teach mostly conversational English, but I also teach TOEIC (Test of English For International Communication), TOEFL (Test of English As a Foreign Language), business, and medical English.

AIC: *How long have you been living in Asahikawa?*

James: I've been living here for little over two years. Japan was always number one on my list of countries to visit. I wanted to experience the culture and try to pick up some of the language. Before coming to Asahikawa I lived and worked in Tokyo. I really wanted to learn snowboarding, so I visited a friend in who lives in Niseko. I liked Hokkaido very much, so when I heard about the opportunity to be transferred to Asahikawa I jumped at the chance. After living in Asahikawa for a few months I met my girlfriend, fell in love and decided to stay.

AIC: *What were your first impressions of Asahikawa and Hokkaido?*

James: My first impression was how beautiful the natural environment is around the city. I certainly don't miss the daily commute in Tokyo; I had to change two trains to get to work. To me one of the best things about Asahikawa is the relaxed pace of life and that it is much easier to get to work.

AIC: *What do like to do in your free time here?*

James: During winter I often go snowboarding. I also spend a lot of my free time at the "Den," a bar in the center of town that's frequented by many foreigners. I like to play football and squash; however, it's quite difficult for me to play either of these here. To keep myself fit I trained for and finished the Asahikawa Half-Marathon in 2009 and 2010. I wasn't very fast, so I think I will try again in 2012. Also, I'm studying a high level medical terminology course, and lately that's been taking a lot of my free time. I'm taking this course in order to be qualified to teach advanced medical English in the future.

AIC: *Which other countries have you visited?*

James: I've traveled quite a lot. I've lived and worked in Australia for a while. I've also lived and worked in Honduras, in Central America, and Tenerife, the most populous island of the seven Spanish Canary Islands. Apart from that, I've traveled a little around Thailand, Kenya, the US, and of course I've visited many countries in Europe.

AIC: *What led you to live in Honduras?*

James: I was a volunteer journalist. I'd just finished university with a degree in media production and communication, so I wanted to get some practical experience as a journalist. I went

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to Honduras to work for a newspaper as a volunteer for four months. Although my main aim was to build up my experience and credentials as a journalist, I also wanted to help people. I hope that through some of my articles I achieved that goal. I also managed to learn a bit of Spanish.

AIC: *Which is the favorite place that you've visited?*

James: I'd have to say it's the Caribbean coast of Honduras. There are three islands off the coast which are part of Honduras. I was only there for around a week, on an island called Roatan. The sea is absolutely beautiful and the scuba diving is fantastic. It lies near the second biggest coral reef in the world, the Mesoamerican Barrier Reef. Roatan, Guanaja and Utila are the three inhabited islands in the Bay Islands.

AIC: *Tell us a little about your hometown?*

James: Newcastle upon Tyne used to be famous for coal mining and shipbuilding. It lies on the River Tyne and was originally a Roman colony, but owes its name to the castle built there in 1080. Today, Newcastle is largely known as a business and cultural center with an exciting nightlife. It has a population of just under 300,000. Of course, it's widely known for its football team, Newcastle United.

AIC: *What did you do back home?*

James: After I graduated university I did a number of different jobs. I was a waiter, and eventually became assistant manager of the restaurant. I also worked for a government sponsored company and managed their complaints department. My job enabled me to help a lot of people, but it was quite stressful. In my free time I used to play a lot of sport, mainly football and squash. I would play in leagues and tournaments, with some success.

AIC: *What are your plans for the future?*

James: Well, first of all I'm hoping to get my qualifications in teaching medical English, and be able to teach more medical and business and other specialized classes. I plan to stay in Asahikawa and develop my career with EC/NOVA. I'm studying Japanese, so one of my goals is to become more fluent in it. I'd also like to do more traveling. There are still many other countries which I'd like to visit.

AIC: *Well, thank you very much for your time, James.*

James: You're welcome.

Newcastle's Gateshead Millennium Bridge over the River Tyne, with the Sage Music Center in the background.



Life In Asahikawa

3-11

By *KITAMURA Tadao*

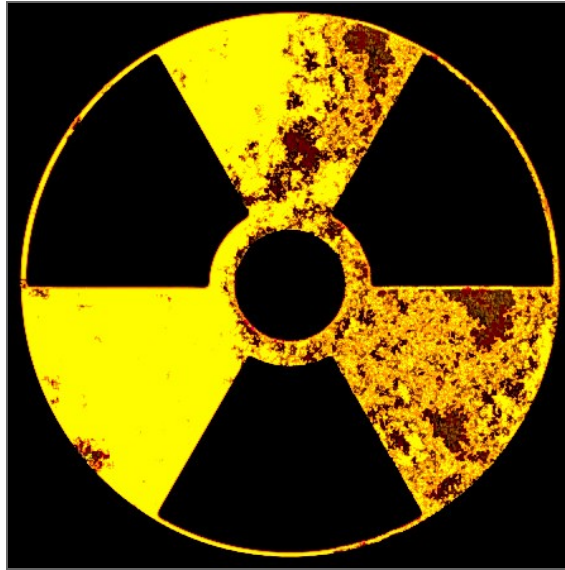
The day, March 11, is coming around again. The date of the 2011 catastrophe, which I will never forget. That day has left enormously difficult and complicated problems for our whole nation. Most of them have yet to be settled, or even the type of action necessary to combat the situation.

Tremendous amount of debris is still left untreated around the devastated cities, towns, and villages. Amounts of debris far exceeds the capacities of individual municipalities. Municipalities are seeking outside assistance in storing the debris; still there is very little hope of finding any solutions to this problem. What makes matters worse is that some of the debris is contaminated with radio-activity; even though it's so minute that it's hardly detectable. Even the national government has no idea as to how to dispose of the debris. Municipal projects to build new towns durable enough to withstand a disaster such as 3-11, in place of the destroyed ones, is facing a difficult obstacle. That is one of individual freedom.

A more severe problem, on a national level, is the one resulting from the destruction of the atomic power plant. About 80 thousands people had been evacuated from the ten contaminated municipalities. In January of this year, a government point man declared that radioactive emission from the damaged atomic reactor has ceased as a result of cooling-off. However, a

very small amount of radioactive Cesium emitted by the explosion is still being detected in various ways: such as in food, timber, water, soil, concrete, and so on. Questions and disquiet regarding the handling of the aftermath are growing across the whole nation.

People have learnt the difficulties of controlling radio-activity and also recognized the astronomical monetary cost of maintaining atomic reactor plants secure. As a result, most of the 20 atomic energy plants in Japan are suspending their operations in order to undertake security checks and measures against any disaster exceeding magnitude 9. However, people are very much concerned with power shortages and electricity price rises.



Public opinion is divided into two camps; some people claim that atomic energy has to be abolished at once for the sake of people's health and security, others claim

that it should be maintained by improving security technology, in order to keep the nation's economy sound and with the reduction of CO² emissions.

On a bright note, March is the month everybody here in Asahikawa has been looking forward to. You will feel a touch of spring coming. Sunshine becomes brighter day by day, and the depth of snow lessens and cherry blossom news starts to arrive from the southern parts of the archipelago.

Winter in Asahikawa

Sounkyo Ice Festival

By SAKURABA Satoshi

I really feel it is colder than usual this year. However, there are many winter events utilizing the Hokkaido's coldness. We can say that the Sapporo Snow Festival and the Asahikawa Winter Festival are some of these famous winter events. On this occasion, I'd like to describe the other famous winter event, the Sounkyo Ice Festival (層雲峡温泉氷瀑まつり.)

Sounkyo is located 60 km to the east of Asahikawa. You can get to the hot springs resort by car in one hour. In the past, it took much longer to get there because the highway had not yet been constructed. Today, you can get there more freely thanks to the highway. The resort is surrounded by mountains where you can enjoy beautiful views. Rock faces in this area are spectacular. In February and March, an ice festival is held in Sounkyo. I used to go to this event since ten years ago, but I couldn't go recently. However, this year I went to see the Sounkyo Ice Festival.

The most peculiar attraction is the artificially illuminated ice caves. Naturally, you can go into the caves. When you look up in the cave, you can see countless hanging icicles. It's truly fantastic as these icicles are also illuminated with many colors. As you walk up the ice stairs, you're offered a grandstand view of the Ice Festival site. You can also take nice pictures from there. Although the holistic scale of the event decreased in size over the years, including the number of icicles in the caves, you can still enjoy a spectacular ice scenery.

As you might suspect, it will be very cold if you go to this event in the night. When I went there, temperatures exceeded -15°C . It is important to wear gloves, a warm cap, and perhaps skiwear. Otherwise, you won't be able to enjoy these beautiful sights freely. As a matter of fact, I didn't wear my gloves because I couldn't use the camera precisely them on, but I gave up in less than thirty minutes. When you go to this event, I highly recommend that you take appropriate measures and sufficiently prepare against cold.



*One of the Ice Towers
at the Sounkyo Ice
Festival (2012)*

Restaurant Review

Robata no Yukari

By SAITO Emi

The sign says “Izakaya Yukara,” but it’s actually “Robata no Yukara.” This Japanese-style pub has been around since 1950. I haven’t been to Yukara for more than 10 years, so this was the first time since it reopened under a new owner.

I usually sit at the counter, but all the seats were taken. I waited for couple of minutes and was taken over to “koagari,” a partitioned tatami-floored seating room.

Yukara gets fresh seafood from Wakkanai, Nemuro, Abasiri, Rumoi and other seaports in Hokkaido. It uses local produce and products. They have a tatami size BBQ grill (about 910mm×1820mm,) and it is fun to watch your food being prepared (I had to peek from my seat).



I usually don’t go with “all you can drink for 2 hours” promotion, but with the price of ¥980, who can turn it down (+¥300 includes beer). I enjoyed Otokoyama warmed sake a bit too much. Hokkaido people tend to prefer strongly seasoned food; however, 80% of Yukara’s customers come from outside of Hokkaido; therefore, the taste is well balanced.

I ordered white lever with chives, Japanese radish salad, sashimi, oden, and baked potatoes.

Friendly staff and nice atmosphere.

**Yukara means, an epic or saga in Ainu.*



Robata no Yukara

Address: 4-jo-dori 7-chome, Asahikawa

Telephone: 0166-23-1114

Operating Hours: 15:00~24:00

Open 365 days



Movies ~ March



*Every Wednesday is "Ladies' Day." Admission is ¥1,000 (tax included) for women at all theaters.

*The 1st day of every month is "Movie Day" in Asahikawa. Admission (tax included) is ¥1,000 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 Marui Imai Department Store (1-jo-dori 8-chome). Get off at "Nagayama 10 (ju)-jo 3 (san)-chome."

Now Showing

- Liar Game - Saisei (Japanese)
- Doraemon - Nobita and the Miracle Island (Japanese/Animation)
- Hugo (English)
- Nihon Retto Ikimonotachi no Monogatari (Japanese)
- Robo-G (Japanese)
- Always 3 Chome no Yuhi (Japanese)
- The Girl With A Dragon Tattoo (English)
- The Twilight Saga: Breaking Down (English)
- Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close (English)
- In Time (English)
- Underworld: Rise of the Lycans (English)
- Tower Heist (English)

Coming Soon

- My Week with Marilyn (English)
- Precure All-Stars - New Stage (Japanese)
- Sherlock Holmes - A Game of Shadows (English)
- Puss in Boots (English/Animation)
- Star Wars Episode 1 - Phantom Menace (English 3D)
- Bokura ga Ita (Japanese)
- Iron Lady (English)

★ **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 Marui Imai Department Store (1-jo-dori 8-chome). Get off at "Nippon Seishi mae."

Now Showing

- Himizu (Japanese)
- AKB48 Documentary - The Show Must Go On (Japanese)
*Showing only from March 3rd thru 16th
- Always 3 Chome no Yuhi (Japanese)
- Robo-G (Japanese)
- Gyakuten Saiban (Japanese)
- War Horse (English)
- The Girl With A Dragon Tattoo (English)
- Hayabusa (Japanese)
- Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close (English)
- In Time (English)
- Liar Game - Saisei (Japanese)

Coming Soon

- Ultra Man Saga (Japanese)
- Bokkyu (Japanese)
- Welcome Home, Hayabusa (Japanese)
- Spec - Ten (Japanese)
- Ouran High School Host Club (Japanese)
- Sherlock Holmes - A Game of Shadows (English)
- Puss in Boots (English/Animation)
- Star Wars Episode 1 - Phantom Menace (English 3D)

Movie schedules change often. Please call the theater for confirmation and details.

American Corner

On February 22nd, 2012, the American Corner at the Asahikawa International Center was formally opened. The ceremony was attended by the Mayor of Asahikawa, NISHIKAWA Masahito, US Consul-General, John N. Ries, US Consulate-General Public Affairs Officer, John C. Taylor, members of the Asahikawa - Bloomington/Normal Sister Cities Committee, and other dignitaries. The corner offers a wide range of books, magazines, DVDs, CDs, and other educational and entertainment material. Come and enjoy this fabulous new section of the Asahikawa International Center.

Venue: Asahikawa International Center, Feeeal Asahikawa 7F 1-jo-dori 8-chome

For More Information Contact: Asahikawa International Committee

Tel: 25-7491, Fax: 23-4924



American Corner at the Sapporo International Plaza

Fun Fridays

Leaders coordinate a variety of interesting activities such as games, discussions, introductions, and quizzes. Meet new people, relax, relate, and communicate through English.

Dates: *Spring Session:* April 13th, May 11th, June 8th

Time: 1:00 ~ 3:00pm & 6:30 ~ 8:30pm, 2nd Friday of the month

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 has many exciting events planned for this year, including Friendship Parties and a Halloween Party. Why not become a volunteer and help plan these events?

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

For further information or to register, please contact AIC.

AIC Computers: The AIC has two computer available for public use free of charge at the Asahikawa International Center (Feeeal Asahikawa 7F 1-jo-dori 8-chome). There is a time limit for use and you must register prior to use. Please feel free to come by and use it anytime as well as check out some of the other services and activities available at the AIC.

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.



Asahikawa International Committee, International Affairs Division
Asahikawa International Center Feeeal Asahikawa 7F, 1-jo-dori 8-chome, Asahikawa 070-0031
Tel: (0166) 25-7491 Fax: (0166) 23-4924
E-mail: cir_kokusai@city.asahikawa.hokkaido.jp

****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.****