



ConsuLink

August 2022 Newsletter

Keeping you updated on Japan-related news in Michigan and Ohio

Bon Festival a Summer Highlight in Japan



Summer in Japan is a time for festivals, and perhaps the most important one is the Bon Festival, which takes place in mid-July or mid-August, depending on regional tradition. Also known as *o-bon* or *urabon*, this festival has its roots in Buddhist and Confucian ideas about honoring one's ancestors. While not a national holiday, the Bon Festival is a time when many Japanese travel to their ancestral homes, spending time with their relatives and engaging in traditional activities to welcome departed ancestors back for a temporary visit.



Such activities include the lighting of fires called *mukaeji* to guide the spirits toward their former earthly homes, and *okuribi* to light their way back to the spirit world at the end of the festival. Sometimes, this takes the form of lighted lanterns floating down the river toward the sea. Another tradition is the creation of *shouryou uma*, "spirit horses," and/or *shouryou ushi*, "spirit cows," to transport the ancestors back and forth. These are made by adding toothpicks or chopsticks as legs to common vegetables such as cucumbers and eggplants.

During the festival, communities gather outdoors to perform *bon odori* folk dances together, in lightweight, cotton yukata robes. One of the most famous *bon* dances is the *Awa Odori* of Tokushima, sister-city to Saginaw, MI. For more examples of Bon Festival traditions, please see the video titled "*Dancing for the Departed*," which focuses on the traditional *bon* dances of a rural island off the coast of southern Japan, by clicking [here](#). It is one of hundreds of educational videos about Japan on the [Japan Video Topics](#) YouTube channel. For Bon Festival activities happening this month in Michigan and Ohio, please see the "Exhibits & Events" column at right.

RECENT CONSULATE ACTIVITIES

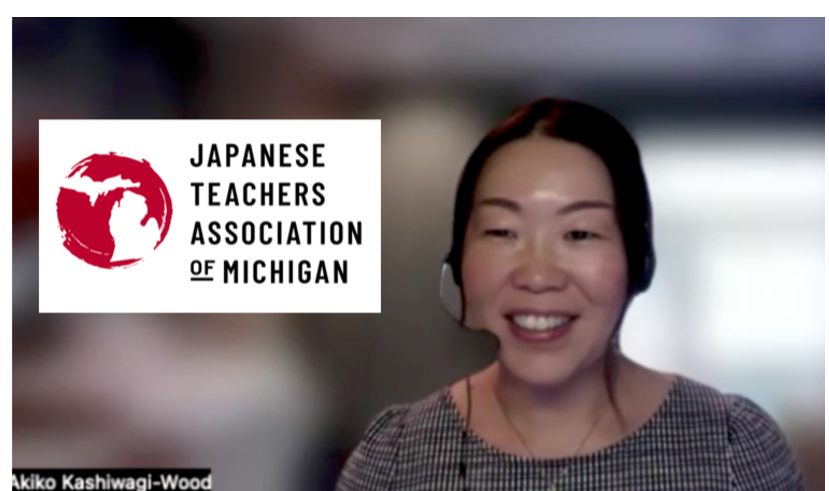
JET Program Participants Depart for Japan



At the end of July, 36 Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Program participants from Michigan and Ohio departed from Detroit Metropolitan Airport to begin their new positions at schools and government offices in various communities throughout Japan. The JET Program, which began 35 years ago, has employed more than 70,000 college graduates from over 50 countries in Japanese schools, boards of education, and government offices, promoting language and cultural exchange at the grassroots level. Depending on their qualifications and interests, JETs work as Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs) or Coordinators for International Relations (CIRs). To learn more about the JET Program, please visit the [JET USA website](#).

SPOTLIGHT ON JAPANESE EDUCATORS IN MICHIGAN & OHIO

Japanese Teachers Association of Michigan Selects New President for 2022-2024



The American Association of Teachers of Japanese (AATJ) has local affiliate chapters in Michigan and Ohio. The Michigan chapter is the Japanese Teachers Association of Michigan, or [JTAM](#), established in 1996. This non-profit organization of K-12 and college/university teachers of Japanese language and culture recently elected a new board for 2022-24, including Dr. Akiko Kashiwagi-Wood (pictured above) of Oakland University, as JTAM President.

While the pandemic posed various challenges, including the suspension of JTAM's annual Michigan Japanese Quiz Bowl, it also brought the creation of new activities, including an online Michigan Japanese Culture Festa for K-16 students of Japanese, as well as monthly "*ochakai*" virtual chats that give JTAM member teachers a chance to speak in Japanese and get to know each other better, and various online exchanges with schools in Michigan's sister-state of Shiga, through the Shiga-Michigan Assembly Project, or SMAP for Youth.

JTAM's first new activity of the school year will be a virtual college-information event on Saturday, September 17, featuring Japanese programs at Michigan colleges and universities for the consideration of high school students who wish to continue their Japanese study after graduation. For more information about JTAM or its activities, please email JTAMsensei@gmail.com.

CALENDAR

Exhibits & Events

Through October 2:
[Yoshitomo Nara: Recent Work](#) @ Cleveland Museum of Art

Fri., August 5
[Cleveland Japanese Meetup Conversation Table](#) @ Shaker Heights, OH

Sat., August 6
[CAPA-MI Splendor of the East](#) @ Stoney Creek Metro Park, Washington Twp., MI

Wed., August 10 & 24
[Omihachiman Sister-City Committee Book Group](#) @ Grand Rapids, MI

Thurs., August 11
[Hofu-Monroe Book Club](#) @ online platform

Fri., August 12
[Van Buren District Library Anime/Manga Club](#) @ Covert, MI

Fri.-Sun., August 12-14
[Matsuricon Anime Convention](#) @ Columbus, OH

Sun., August 14
[Japanese-American Community Day](#) @ Great American Ball Park, Cincinnati, OH
[JASCO 2022 Obon Festival](#) @ Dublin, OH

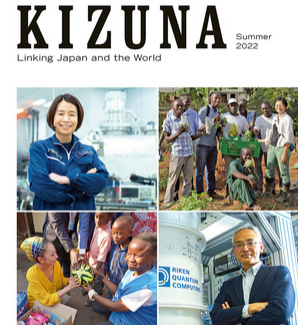
Thurs., August 18
[Cultural History of Japanese Buddhist Art](#) @ Saginaw, MI

Sat., August 20
[Anime Afternoon](#) @ Ellet Branch Library, Akron, OH
[MI Bon Summer Festival](#) @ Novi Public Library, Novi, MI

Sat., August 27
[Ann Arbor Bonsai Society Show](#) @ Ann Arbor, MI

QUICK LINKS

[Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan](#)



[Kizuna: The official magazine of the Government of Japan](#)

Digital publication reporting on a variety of topics, promoting stronger links between Japan and the world.

[Consulate General of Japan in Detroit](#)



ConsuLink is the official newsletter of the Consulate-General of Japan in Detroit

400 Renaissance Center, Suite 1600 | Detroit, MI 48243 US

[CGJ Website](#)

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