

## 2010's Goodbyes and Hellos

Summer is here, and this means any number of things: hot and humid days of *tsuyu*, freedom from the kotatsu, grapes and melons in the grocery stores, and summer vacation travels. It also means the end of one JET year and the beginning of the next, and with the excitement of the new arrivals comes the sadness at saying goodbye to some of our fellow Saitama Jets. To all our leavers, we hope that the last year or more of your life in Saitama have left you with friendships, memories, and more than a few skills to carry with you wherever you may go next. *Otsukaresama deshita*, and all the best for your future journeys!

### 2010 Leavers

**2005**  
Matt Zorc  
Clint Nudera  
Edward Murton  
Nathan Keogh  
Jose Barragan Bothwell

**2006**  
Jonathan Tegnell  
Mandy Prorok  
Sheila Carillo

**2007**  
Aaron Wright  
Jenny Wojcik  
Sadaf Taqvi  
Jenny Rousseau  
Peter McCamus  
Lauren Maso  
Jane Lam  
Brian Kelley  
Richard Greenawalt  
Timothy Grass  
Joe English

Megan Butler  
Geronimo Brillo  
Kat Brecknell

**2008**  
Kelly Smith  
Erin Morioka  
Ivy Loh  
Dave Buttacavoli  
Pascal Battrick

**2009**  
Arthur Sullivan

## And, of course, a big welcome to our newcomers!

Hannah Woodward  
Stephen Welch  
Karl Hoeschen

Jonathon Goujon  
Joy Gilham  
James Batson

## CONTENTS

- 1 Goodbyes and Hellos
- 2 Being PEPY in Cambodia
- 4 10 Things I'll Miss About Japan
- 6 Being Replaced
- 8 The Leek
- 9 Tango Corner
- 10 Destination: Saitama
- 12 Recipe Corner
- 13 PA Notes
- 13 Saitama AJET Announcements

## Being PEPY in Cambodia!

Mandy Prorok  
Tokigawa ALT

Over Golden Week this past May, I went to Cambodia on a Golden Week Tour organized by the NGO “PEPY Ride.” I spent ten days sightseeing, supporting local NGOs, and being educated both about Cambodia’s past and present, as well as the ups and downs of international aid, all—well, ALMOST all—from the back of a bicycle. What’s this “PEPY” thing you ask? Well, take a seat and buckle yourself in for one heck of a story!

Five or so years ago, six friends working as JET Programme ALTs were committed to their labor of love amongst the mountains and valleys of the islands we lovingly refer to as Japan. Bicycling enthusiasts all, the six friends decided to undertake a border-to-border, five-week bicycle tour of Cambodia. But why cycle only? Why not dedicate the undertaking to a meaningful cause? The friends found an organization in Cambodia working to improve education, perfect for JET ALTs, so they arranged to raise money associated with their bicycle tour to help this organization build a school near Siem Reap. Yay!

Time came for the friends to start their trip. Along the way they stopped at schools to teach English and environmental education classes. Excitement built as they closed in on the location of “their” school. When they finally reached “their” school’s community though, dismay set in. The money they raised hadn’t gone towards building a new school in a community that had previously been without. No; instead their money had gone towards adding additions onto an already existing building that was more than sufficient for the needs of the community in the first place. Their dismay deepened as they came to realize



Most of our touring group, out on the road. In the middle is Daniela Papi, former JET and Executive Director of PEPY Ride. I'm on the right!

that the true issues behind substandard education in this community were not being addressed: extremely low teacher pay, native language illiteracy, transportation issues to and from school, lack of potable water and access to materials, just to name a few! Without addressing these issues, “their” school would never be more than just a building.

Did the cycling friends hang their heads in defeat and trudge back to Japan, deflated? No! They formed their own NGO to tackle all those underlying issues plaguing education in Cambodia to help turn “their” school into a thriving educational entity!

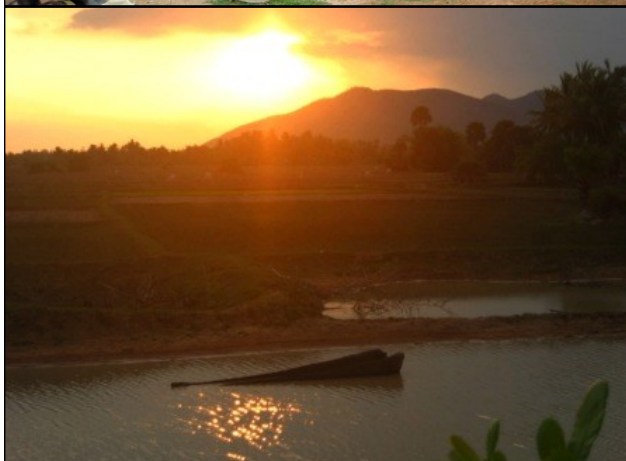
(cont. next page)

Five years later, “PEPY Ride,” which stands for “Protect the Earth, Protect Yourself,” is still going strong, doing amazing things for education in their community, as well as supporting other grassroots NGOs around Cambodia. They were actually just featured in a CNN report about responsible “voluntourism”—see [edition.cnn.com/2010/TRAVEL/05/31/voluntourism.tips/index.html](http://edition.cnn.com/2010/TRAVEL/05/31/voluntourism.tips/index.html). As a financial support mechanism for the NGO, the six friends also formed a bicycle tour/voluntourism branch called “PEPY Tours.” “PEPY Tours” offers a range of opportunities, from specifically hands-on volunteering to hard-core, long-distance bicycle tours, and everything in between. Whatever you do, the restaurants at which you eat, the places where you sleep, the site-visits you make, will all be in support of community-sponsored development projects.

If you’re simply looking to travel to Cambodia, or maybe looking to make an impact during your vacation times, I highly recommend teaming up with PEPY. You can’t go wrong in the hands of former fellow JETs! To read more about them, check out their websites, [www.pepyride.org](http://www.pepyride.org) and [www.pepytours.com](http://www.pepytours.com).



**Left:** My rural homestay house! **Below:** Visiting a Community Development Training Center, one of PEPY Ride's partner NGOs. This project is called "Funky Junk," creations made from used plastic bags.



**Above:** The sunset outside our homestay village. **Right:** Our Cambodian bicycle tour guide, Lucky, posing on a tuk-tuk. You could not be in better hands on a bicycling tour in Cambodia, as Lucky happens to be a member of Cambodia's national cycling team!...Oh, and did I mention he is currently Cambodia's #1 competitive cyclist?!



# 10 Things I'll Miss About Japan

Lauren Maso  
Kuki (Kurihashi) ALT

There are many things about Japan that's bound to get on anyone's nerves. As I get ready to leave this summer, I think about how happy I am that I won't suffer through another winter with no central heating, or be referred to as "American Sized," or deal with the nuances of communicating (which I find is not so much "reading between the lines" as it is "reading minds"). But for every one thing I won't miss about Japan, there probably three things that I will miss. Naturally I'll miss my town, my friends, and my students, but there's also countless little things that I'll miss about Japan. Here is a list of a handful of those things, in no particular order.

**The diplomacy of Janken:** In elementary and junior high school, there are few conflicts that can't be resolved with a round of janken. There's an extra jelly dessert? Janken. Who won that last karuta card? Janken. No one wants to volunteer to present first? Janken. The loser may groan about it, but no one ever demands a rematch. The word of Janken is final!

**Combi:** Oh how I'll miss these beacons of light, a place where I can pay my bills and buy my onigiri, where I can stop in for pudding at 12 pm or 12 am, where I can pay for a bottle of water with an ichi-man-en bill and the clerk won't even blink. I'll always remember the friendly chime and the "Irasshaimase" of my local Family Mart.



**The Cuteness:** How can I not love a place where everything has a mascot? Where no matter the location, there's a gift shop with charms of Hello Kitty, Rilakkuma, AND Doraemon dressed like local fruits and flowers? Where my school lunch milk carton has a picture of Kobaton conducting a train or having a picnic? Frankly, everything without a smiley face is just boring now.

**Meeting people from around the world:** In my hometown of Fort Collins, Colorado, meeting someone from east of the Mississippi river is about as "international" as it gets. So you can imagine my wide-eyed delight when I first karaoke'd with a group of Australians, or went to an onsen with a German, or danced at a club with a South African. Now it seems normal to go out with a Brit, an Aussie, and a Japanese person and then meet someone who's Spanish but grew up in South America, and is stopping over in Japan on their way to Thailand.

(cont. next page)

**My students' English mistakes:** Sometimes when I grade my student's journals and tests, I worry that they haven't learned any English at all. But usually the worry is replaced by delight as I read things like "I was in the blue grope," and "I took part in an event like a cowboy." Months are especially fun: "Jury" for July, "Nobender" for November. However, I still have no idea what month "Juniary" is supposed to be.



**Kotatsu:** While heating during the winter in Japan leaves quite a bit to be desired, kotatsu is completely awesome and something I wish I had back home. When the cold would set in around December, I'd throw the quilt over the table and tried to have everything I needed within arms-reach because I wouldn't leave until April.

**Being a semi-celebrity:** What can I say? I enjoy it when my kids exclaim "Your eyes are blue!" or marvel at my curly hair, or ask for my signature on their notebooks. It's also fun to hear "Ro-ren-sensei, hello!" as I ride my bike around town. Of course, there are two sides to this coin, such as being spotted talking a guy friend and being asked, "Was that your boyfriend?" at school the next day, or a student forgetting my name and referring to me as "gaikokujin". Despite this, I'll be sad not being so "exotic" when I return home.

**Stationery:** Maybe I'm weird, but I've always loved shopping for school supplies, and Japan is a stationery junky's dreamland. Even relatively small stores have pens that come in 17 different widths and an aisle devoted to stationery paper. There also all the wonderful stickers, notebooks, and file folders that have any animal, character, or famous landmark you can imagine on it. I'll especially miss the awesome pop-up, foil embossed, and die-cut greeting cards.

**Souvenir snacks:** I think most of us think of "souvenirs" as tacky little trinkets we give to friends who probably will put it in a box and never look upon it again. But in Japan, the word for souvenir, "o-miyage," also means little individually wrapped treats. Every little town has them in all shapes and flavors. They can be . . . interesting, like say a sembei with a slice of octopus baked in, but it's a perfect gift for co-workers.

**The General Bizarreness:** Can you think of your first "Wow, this place is weird" moment in Japan? Was it when you first encountered a talking toilet? Or watched a variety show about eating? Or saw a little old man using a pink keitai with 17 charms dangling from it? Or learned the latest character all your students are obsessed with is a bowl of rice with a face called "Gohan-chan"? I'll miss these nearly daily encounters with the lovable weirdness that is Japan.

## Being Replaced

Dave Buttacavoli  
Higashi Chichibu ALT

I perhaps had the biggest lack of judgment back in late January when I decided to return to America and forego a third year in Japan. Now that I'm faced with actually leaving my little village and all my wonderful students I realize that I should have stayed one more year. Every day my decision to return home eats away at me—how could I possibly think that leaving would be a good idea? I get attached to things and people extremely easily, so I should have known leaving would be hard. I just didn't realize it would be this hard.

I decided to go home for Christmas last year. Even though I was familiar with my surroundings and activities here, I wasn't enthralled with Japan before leaving for America. I was in a routine here, and I knew going home would ruin me, but I just couldn't pass up Christmas with my family or risk breaking my mother's heart. When I went home to America I broke the mold—and I had a fabulous time. It was great seeing my family and friends, eating my favorite foods, and to be honest, well, it was nice not being in Japan. I dreaded returning, and when it was time to go back, I told myself I would absolutely not re-contract for a third year. So that's what I did. But a funny thing happened: I actually started to become re-accustomed with my Japanese lifestyle. I actually started liking Japan. That had never happened before. It turned out that the trip did ruin me. Those feelings upon coming back to Japan played a major role in my decision to not re-contract, and now here I am, about to go home in a month and feeling completely depressed and lost.

Higashichichibu-mura is a special place. It's the last official village in Saitama, and I'm not going to lie, it made me feel special teaching here. The kids are great, the people are nice, and I loved riding my orange scooter to work everyday and taking in the gorgeous scenery. I'm not the most outgoing person in the world, and Ogawa-machi isn't really great for meeting younger people, but I was still having fun here. I was starting to meet new people and become more outgoing. I realized just saying "hello" to random people on the streets makes you feel great and makes you stand out even more in the community. Oh, and who can forget the awesomeness of the girls' volleyball club? I had always liked my students, but within the past few months I felt I had become even closer with them. I was joking around with them in the hallways, playing with them at lunch, and actually feeling like they truly enjoyed having me around. But now, it feels my time is being cut short and it's all being taken away from me because of one dumb decision. It stings because the kids I started with will be graduating next year, and I really want to see them graduate. It would make my time here feel complete. I won't be able to do that though, and I can only blame myself.

I tried to see if I could stay for another year back in April. I really thought everything would be fine and they would love to have me back, but they said I was too late. The school was all for it, but the Board of Education had already found a replacement for me. *A replace-*

*ment for me.* I've spent the past two years of my life in this village and now I'm being replaced. That absolutely sickens me to no end. I'm just so worried I'll be forgotten and this new ALT will steal my life, bonds, and relationships that I built up over two years. I'm terrified the students will like this new ALT more than me, my friends will like this person more than me, and that I'll be forgotten. *I'm being replaced.* I had nightmares that the new ALT would also be named David. Knowing I'll be 9,000 miles away in Florida with absolutely nothing to look forward to and not being able to see my students or friends is killing me.

When I found out it was not possible to stay another year, I was too shocked for any sort of reaction. I walked back to my desk in a complete daze and just sat down and stared outside for a long time. And then I started crying. In order to save myself from embarrassment I locked myself in the bathroom for ten minutes. I barely ate anything for almost a week. I'm desperately trying to enjoy my last month here and go out on a high note, but it's hard coming to school knowing I'll most likely never see these kids again. I put on a smile in the classroom and still joke with them, but I'm scared to get any closer. It might ruin me. Even though I've been feeling a tad better lately, deep down it still hurts to no end. I know people are not supposed to live with regrets, but I know I'll regret this decision for a long, long time. I'm already envious of the person who will replace me, and I don't even know them.

I've entertained the thought of going to a private company or perhaps even being moved to another location with JET in the off-chance someone has to go home. It is certainly intriguing, but it would defeat the whole purpose of staying. I'll be honest with all of you: It's not about staying in Japan for another year. It's about staying in Higashichichibu-mura which just so happens to be located in Japan. I'm sure not many people would be willing to stay in an area so far from the loop, but my heart truly belongs to this village. And I'm walking away from it. I don't think I've ever been more down in my entire life. I truly love Higashichichibu-mura and the life I've created for myself. I believe in miracles, but staying here would need something beyond a miracle. I can't even fathom in my wildest imagination a possible scenario where I could stay in Higashichichibu-mura. That's how bad this situation has become. In fact, it's not even a situation anymore. It's over for me.

I've cherished my time here and I'll never forget it—but I wish it could have lasted just one year more. I'm already a wreck a month before my departure. I don't even want to think what kind of state I'll be in when the time comes for me to get on the plane. The only thing I can hope for is that I find something in Florida that will distract me from thinking about Higashichichibu-mura all the time. It's going to be a rough transition to suddenly go on living an "American" life after experiencing all things Japanese for the past two years. I'm reminded of perhaps the final line of the musical *The Phantom of the Opera* when the Phantom sings with sorrow, "It's over now, the music of the night." Well, my song is over. I just hope my ending will be a little more genki than the Phantom's ending was.



# The Leek, or, How a Gimmicky Fake Vegetable Changed My Life

Fernando Ramos

Hasuda ALT

“Yo Negi-sensei!”

Much to my equal amusement and chagrin, that has become a standard greeting for your dear author. It started innocently enough: a Christmas activity having elementary schoolers draw cards with holiday themes. Makes for a fun, easy day and, honestly, it's just cool seeing what crazy ideas the kids cook up. On that sunny yet stupidly cold December morning came the card that would change the course of my ALT career, however long it lasts. It was that of a black-robed Santa stealing negi, or leeks as the title of this article might imply, from the “virtual idol” (read: otaku fanbait) Miku Hatsune.

Now, while I am a card-carrying fan of Japanese pop culture (read: NERD), I should note I was not a particular fan of that character, the mascot for a computer program that synthesizes human voice to produce syrupy pop songs. However, I am a fan of the absurd, and Santa stealing leeks is as absurd as they come. And as a card-carrying otaku, it was also a long-overdue realization that, yes, the kids are alright and they like their Nico Nico Douga as much as I do. I still remember how that little sixth grader's eyes looked as I snapped a picture of the card: a mixture of delight and soul-shattering fear. If only she could see what the future the future had in store.



This picture remained a mere memento until the following spring. It bears mentioning that Hatsune and the leek became something of an Internet meme of the kind that only the Japanese could be capable of. To that end, it was only a little surprising to find a UFO Catcher in Akihabara that was chockfull of fake leeks made of some sort of mysterious spongy substance. It's probably called poly-somethingorother, but that's not the important part.

The important part is when I made the decision to bring one of those to school. The sixth graders were often a quiet bunch, burnt out on school and life and having long since



stopped caring until a change in their surroundings gave them a jolt of renewed energy. As soon as that green squishy thing came out, there was a definite change in the atmosphere of the room. The silence of indifference became the silence of restrained laughter, and that silence was broken as soon as I started spinning it while humming the Levan Polka (if you are blessed enough to not know what that is, I envy you).



In that single twirl, a group that eluded any sort of connection for nearly a year was with me for the lesson. Incidentally, the negi itself didn't last a day—the kids grabbing at it and my self-defense head-bopping combined to make it KIA before lunchtime. The price of celebrity.

Eventually, I transferred out of that school, but as I gathered a steady back-up supply, the leek legacy lives on. When I first arrived in my sleepy hollow of Hasuda, I was just another foreigner out of place trying to eke out a living; but after you hear kids from a school you just transferred to recoiling in dread and joy at the sound of the word “negi,” it's hard not to feel like you've planted yourself in the community.

## Tango Corner

Though the World Cup has taken up a good deal of air time, from the illegal betting scandals in the sumo world to foot-and-mouth disease in Miyazaki prefecture, a number of kanji have been regularly appearing in the news and across TV screens. Here are a few that have made their way into the headlines.

賭ける (かける)	to bet; to make a bet
賭博 (とばく) する	gambling, to gamble
恐喝 (きょうかつ) する	extortion, to extort
解雇 (かいこ) する	dismiss, fire
口蹄疫 (こうていえき)	foot-and-mouth disease (lit: mouth-hoof disease)
処分 (しょぶん) する	disposal, to dispose
感染 (かんせん) する	infection, to be infected

## Destination: Saitama

### Events In and Around the Prefecture

- **Tanabata** (七夕) One of the highlights of the summer season: Tanabata festivals. On the 7th day of the 7th month of the lunar calendar, Orihime and Hikoboshi, two stars said to be lovers, cross the Milky Way to reunite. Nowadays, towns and cities hold their festivals anywhere between mid-July (following the solar calendar) and mid-August (following the lunar calendar), meaning you can enjoy this festival for almost a month. Here are a few happening in Saitama:
  - ★Fukaya Tanabata: July 9-11 (Fri-Sat), 10 am - 9 pm along the Nakasendō road, 5 min. from Fukaya (深谷) station on the Takasaki (高崎) line.
  - ★Ogawa Tanabata: July 24 (Sat.) 11 am - 10 pm, July 25 (Sun.) 11 am - 9:30 pm, outside Ogawamachi (小川町) station on the Tōbu Tōjō (東武東上) and Hachikō (八高) lines. Added bonus: Writing your Tanabata wishes on strips of Ogawa washi paper, and fireworks on the 24th at 7:15 pm.
  - ★Omiya Nisshin Tanabata: Aug. 6-7 (Fri.-Sat.), 3 pm - 9:30 pm just outside of Nisshin (日進) station on the Kawagoe (川越) line.
  - ★Sayama Iruma River Tanabata: Aug 7-8 (Sat. - Sun.), noon - 8:30 pm along Tanabata Dōri near the west exit of Sayama-shi (狭山市) station on the Seibu Ikebukuro (西武池袋) line.
- **Kuki Lantern Festival** (久喜提燈祭り「天王様」, *Kuki Chōchin Matsuri "Tennō-sama"*) July 12 (Mon.) - 18 (Sun.), 12 pm - 9 pm in the area around the west exit of Kuki (久喜) station. The origins of this festival date back to 1783, when a volcanic eruption from Mt. Asama on the boarder of Gunma and Nagano caused a famine throughout the region. To pray for town's well-being, the people in the town now known as Kuki began this festival, which features large *dashi* (山車), Japanese-style floats, featuring mannequins of historical figures, musicians, and by night, hundreds of glowing paper lanterns. With over 220 years of history and more than a quarter of a million visitors, this has grown to become one of the largest lantern festivals in the Kantō area. **Access** West exit of Kuki station on the Utsunomiya (宇都宮) and Tōbu Isesaki (東武伊勢崎) lines. **More Info** [kuki.jpn.org/main/kankoukyoukai/tennousama.html](http://kuki.jpn.org/main/kankoukyoukai/tennousama.html) (Japanese) and 0480.21.8632 .
- **SKIP City International D-Cinema Festival** (SKIPシティ国際Dシネマ映画祭, *Skip Shiti Kokusai D-Shinema Eigasai*) July 23 (Fri.) - Aug. 1 (Sun.) in Kawaguchi. This D-as-in-digital movie festival features films that have garnered nominations and awards from around the world. In addition to screenings of films submitted for competition, special programs and other screenings will be held as well. Hosted in SKIP City, an audio-visual complex with a film museum, audio-visual library, and more, this 10-day event is the perfect place to view films from up-and-coming directors (and for a fraction of what you'd pay in an ordinary theater). **Access** Free shuttle from Kawaguchi (川口) station on the Keihin Tōhoku line. **More Info** at [www.skipcity-dcf.jp/en/](http://www.skipcity-dcf.jp/en/).
- **Koshigaya Fireworks Festival** (越谷花火大会, *Koshigaya Hanabi Taikai*) July 31 (Sat.), 7 pm - 9 pm. Come out to the eastern end of the prefecture for an evening with over 5000

fireworks in a two-hour period. Put on your yukata, bring along a fan, and enjoy the summer show. **Access** Koshigaya Central Civic Center (越谷市中央市民会館) and surrounding areas; 6 min. from the east exit of Koshigaya (越谷) station on the Tōbu Isesaki and Hibiya (日比谷) lines. **More Info** at [www.koshigaya-sightseeing.jp](http://www.koshigaya-sightseeing.jp) (Japanese).

● **Saitama City Fireworks Festival** (さいたま市花火大会, *Saitama-shi Hanabi Taikai*) Saitama City is holding three fireworks festivals this year:

- **Ōwada Park** (大和田公園): July 30 (Fri.) 7:30-9:00 pm. **Access** 15 min. from Omiya Kōen (大宮公園) or Ōwada (大和田) stations on the Tōbu Isesaki line or Toro (土呂) station on the Utsunomiya line.
- **Ōmagi Park** (大間木公園): Aug. 14 (Sat.) 7:30-9:00 pm. **Access** 10 min. from Higashi Urawa (東浦和) station on the Musashino line
- **Iwatsuki Bunka Park** (岩槻文化公園): Aug. 21 (Sat.) 7:30-9:00 pm. **Access** About 35 min. by foot from Iwatsuki (岩槻) or Higashi Iwatsuki (東岩槻) on the Tōbu Noda (東武野田) line (just follow the crowd).

**More Info** at [www.scvb.or.jp/hanabi/](http://www.scvb.or.jp/hanabi/) (Japanese).

● **Blueberry and Plum Picking** (ブルーベリーの摘み取りとプルーン狩り, *Burūberii no tsumitori to purūn-gari*) Late July-late Aug. (blueberries) and late Aug.-late Sept. (plums). You can buy your wrapped and marked-up fruit at the store, but why not make a day trip to the fruit farms in the town of Misato (美里, not to be confused with the other Misato/三郷, a city in eastern Saitama), home to more blueberry farms than any other town in the country? All entrance fees are ¥300; blueberries are only ¥1300/kg and plums ¥700/bag. **Access** Misato is fairly inaka, making taxi the most reliable mode of transportation for those without cars. Several blueberry farms are in walking distance from the small station of Matsuhisa (松久) on the Hachikō (八高) line. The Kankō Nōen Information Center is a 20 min. walk Matsuhisa station (no taxis available). Or, take a taxi for 15-20 min. from the south exit of Honjō (本庄) station on the Takasaki line or the north exit of Yorii (寄居) station on the Tōbu Tōjō and Chichibu Tetsudō (秩父鉄道) lines. **More Info** Pick a farm, but call ahead to verify availability (list at [www.misato-kanko.com/kanko\\_kajuen/img/2009\\_nouen\\_guide\\_map.jpg](http://www.misato-kanko.com/kanko_kajuen/img/2009_nouen_guide_map.jpg) for blueberries, top, and plums, bottom). You can also call the Kankō Nōen Information Center at 090.8890.8517 (10 am - 4 pm, 19 July - 10 Sept.). See [www.misato-kanko.com/kanko\\_kajuen/index.html](http://www.misato-kanko.com/kanko_kajuen/index.html) (Japanese).

● **Furutone River Floating Lanterns** (古利根川流灯, *Furutonegawa Ryūtō*) Aug. 7 and 8 (Sat.-Sun) 6 pm - 12 am, Sugito. This festival originally began in the early years of the Shōwa (1926-89) period and was revived over 15 years ago to once again celebrate the season. Floating paper lanterns, some as large as a tatami mat, are carefully built and painted. As the sun sets, the lanterns are lit and set afloat in the Furutone River, creating a spectacle that entrances resident and visitor alike **Access** 1 min. from the east exit from Tōbu Dōbutsuen (東武動物園) on the Tōbu Tōjō line . **More Info** at [www.kankou.sugito.com/index.html](http://www.kankou.sugito.com/index.html) (Japanese).

## Recipe Corner: Okinawa Edition

Denise Schlickbernd, Saitama CIR/PA

The oppressive heat and humidity of summer usually doesn't rank very high on people's list of Favorite Things About Japan, but in addition to summer foods like melons and grapes, summer recipes help make up for the sultry tsuyu weather. Unlike the heavier foods in colder seasons, summer fare helps combat *natsu bate* (being tired from the summer heat). The people living on the Okinawan islands are well-versed in these matters, so try these recipes the next time you feel the heat getting to you.

### Goya Champuru

This recipe is a great way to eat goya, aka bitter melon. As you might infer, this vegetable is extremely bitter, but it also contains extremely high amounts of vitamin C (and more) said to be good for the body during hot summer months. Choose goya that are dark green with firm bumps, and whether eating cooked or fresh, soak raw, thin slices in salty water or salt directly, then rinse, to reduce the bitterness. Goya champuru itself can be made with any variety of vegetables. Substitute pork with Spam, *fu* (wheat gluten, 麩), or use just firm, drained tofu.

- 1 goya, thinly sliced
- 100-150g sliced pork
- 1/2 package bean sprouts
- 1/2 tsp. salt (to taste)
- 1 block firm (*momen*) tofu, well-drained
- 1 onion, sliced
- 2 eggs, slightly beaten
- 1 tsp. dashi (to taste)

- 1) Cut goya in half lengthwise, scoop out the seeds and pith, cut into slices and soak in salt water 10 minutes. To drain tofu, wrap in paper towel(s), place between two heavy plates, and microwave on low ( $\leq 300W$ ) for 1-2 min. Let set ca. 10 min.
- 2) Heat cooking oil (sesame, vegetable, etc.) in a pan over high heat. Tear tofu into chunks and sauté until golden brown. Remove from pan.
- 3) Next sauté the pork (if using Spam, no need to add more oil), then in order: onion, goya, bean sprouts. While veggies are still crisp, add eggs and stir, then turn off heat. Add salt and dashi. You can also try using soy sauce. Season with koregusu (Okinawan chili pepper condiment).



### Sata Andagi (サーターアンダーギー)

These doughnut-like deep fried pastries, crispy on the outside and cake-like on the inside, can be eaten warm or cool. Try variations with pumpkin, sweet potato, raw sugar, and more.

- 220 g. flour
- 2/3 (Japanese) C. sugar (brown)
- 2 tsp. baking powder
- 2 tsp. vegetable oil
- 2 eggs

- 1) Sift flour and baking powder. In a separate bowl beat eggs and sugar until smooth and thick, being careful not to create froth.
- 2) Add flour mixture to eggs. When about 80% mixed, add oil and mix well.
- 3) With lightly moistened hands, take dough and roll into balls about 2 cm (a little less than an inch) and gently drop into deep frying oil heated to 165°. Andagi are done when balls split into a tulip-like shape and rise to the surface with a deep golden brown color.

(from [www.wonder-okinawa.jp/026/recipe/andagi.html](http://www.wonder-okinawa.jp/026/recipe/andagi.html))

# PA NOTES

## **Leaving on a JET Plane...**

For those of you leaving the Program this year, there are undoubtedly many things on your list to do between now and the end of your contract. If you haven't already, go to [www.pref.saitama.lg.jp/page/jet-participants.html](http://www.pref.saitama.lg.jp/page/jet-participants.html) to download the *Out on a High Note* handbook, End of Contract Expenses Worksheet, and more. You'll find information on how to handle your final expenses, procedures to take care of before you leave, and how to get rid of all your extra stuff (because really, you don't want to be That Sempai who left their successor with mountains of crap, do you?) and much more. It can be a stressful process, especially with the last-minute get-togethers and trips, so don't forget to take care of your physical and mental health during this time.

## **Staying Another Year?**

For those who are staying, please remember to submit your contact information confirmation form that was sent out to you earlier in the spring.

## **Saitama Orientation Extravaganza!**

This year's Saitama Orientation will be on August 10-11 (Wed.-Thurs.), and Saitama Orientation Assistants (SOAs) are wanted! The official announcement and application form will be sent to COs in upcoming weeks. Basic SOA duties include helping orientation attendees at the train station, facilitating regional information sessions, and other sempai-ly tasks. SOA will be treated as official work duties.

Additionally, a second day will offer new training experiences to all Jets, from 1st-year to 5th-years. The morning of August 11th will feature disaster training, including earthquake and typhoon simulations, and the afternoon will include workshops on cultural and communication barriers and solutions in the workplace. Attendance is voluntary for 2nd-years and above; this will be treated as kenshū (i.e., CO's permission required, but transportation fees paid by the JET Council and no need to take nenkyū). The sign-up form for these training activities will be sent with the SOA announcement. If you're going to be in the prefecture this August, why not make a detour from your desk and take advantage of this opportunity with your fellow Jets?

# Saitama AJET Announcements

A couple announcements from Eiko and Bryan, your trusty Saitama AJET tantōs!

## ***Welcome Party for New Jets!***

We'll be having a welcome party later this summer to greet our Jets in true Saitama style. More details will be coming soon!

## ***July SIEN Event***

After the hanami even with SIEN at Shinjuku Gyoen in April, come back for a chance to chat (in the language of your preference) with the SIEN people you met at their July English club and nomikai on July 9. Nomikai fee is ¥ 2500, or free if you help with the English club. The English club is from 7:40-9:30 on the 8th floor of the Sonic City building near the west exit of Omiya station, and the nomikai at a nearby restaurant from 9:40-11:30. For more information, email Ryōji Shimada at [ryoji\\_sien@ybb.ne.jp](mailto:ryoji_sien@ybb.ne.jp).

## Editor's Note

Summertime, and the livin' is easy—at least for those under fully functioning air conditioners. Even though I've grown up in places with high heat and humidity, it doesn't make *mushi atsui* weather any easier. Meanwhile, trying to keep household mold at bay and to dry out my laundry is a “special” challenge of the season. A more welcome challenge, though, is the balcony garden I (try to) maintain during the warmer months. This requires a certain amount of creativity with what goes where—the space of about two-and-a-half tatami mats is also used for the AC unit as well as laundry and futon hanging—but the prospect of blooming morning glories or perhaps a couple ears of blue corn is good motivator.

The summer has brought changes to more than this year's Saitama Jet lineup. The *MemoRandom* was previously posted on a closed link, but due to changes in the web page programming, it will now be posted on a page accessible to the general public. We'll still *gambaru* to bring you the voices of your fellow Jets, and we continue to look forward to your submissions!

## PREFECTURAL ADVISORS

### International Division

Denise Schlickbernd	<a href="mailto:a2705-02(AT)pref.saitama.lg.jp">a2705-02(AT)pref.saitama.lg.jp</a>	048.830.2708
Reiko Kawanabe	<a href="mailto:kawanabe.reiko(AT)pref.saitama.lg.jp">kawanabe.reiko(AT)pref.saitama.lg.jp</a>	048.830.2704
Kaori Fujinami	<a href="mailto:fujinami.kaori(AT)pref.saitama.lg.jp">fujinami.kaori(AT)pref.saitama.lg.jp</a>	048.830.2708
Tomie Harada	<a href="mailto:harada.tomie(AT)pref.saitama.lg.jp">harada.tomie(AT)pref.saitama.lg.jp</a>	048.830.2708

### Prefectural Board of Education

Clayton Frederick	<a href="mailto:a6760-32(AT)pref.saitama.lg.jp">a6760-32(AT)pref.saitama.lg.jp</a>	048.833.0548
Diego Yonamine	<a href="mailto:a6760-29(AT)pref.saitama.lg.jp">a6760-29(AT)pref.saitama.lg.jp</a>	048.833.0548
Sonia Nishizono	<a href="mailto:a6760-31(AT)pref.saitama.lg.jp">a6760-31(AT)pref.saitama.lg.jp</a>	048.822.0899
Kazuaki Sugita	<a href="mailto:sugita.kazuaki(AT)pref.saitama.lg.jp">sugita.kazuaki(AT)pref.saitama.lg.jp</a>	048.833.7392
Takahiro Mori	<a href="mailto:mori.takahiro(AT)pref.saitama.lg.jp">mori.takahiro(AT)pref.saitama.lg.jp</a>	048.833.7391

## EDITORS & PUBLISHERS

**Editor:** Saitama Council for Effective ALT Utilization (Saitama JET Council)

**Publisher:** Saitama Prefectural International Division

The opinions and articles published are not necessarily the views of the editor or publisher.

Please send your contributions to:

Denise Schlickbernd  
International Division  
Saitama Prefectural Government  
3-15-1 Takasago, Urawa-ku  
Saitama-shi, Saitama 330-9301

Phone: 048.830.2708

Fax: 048.830.4748

Email: [a2705-02\(AT\)pref.saitama.lg.jp](mailto:a2705-02(AT)pref.saitama.lg.jp)

### Special Thanks to Our Contributors:

**Fernando Ramos**  
**Mandy Prorok**  
**Lauren Maso**  
**Dave Buttacavoli**

**Next Deadline: Sept. 3rd**